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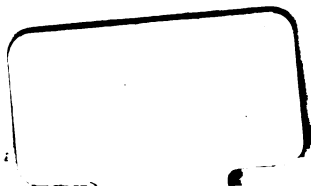
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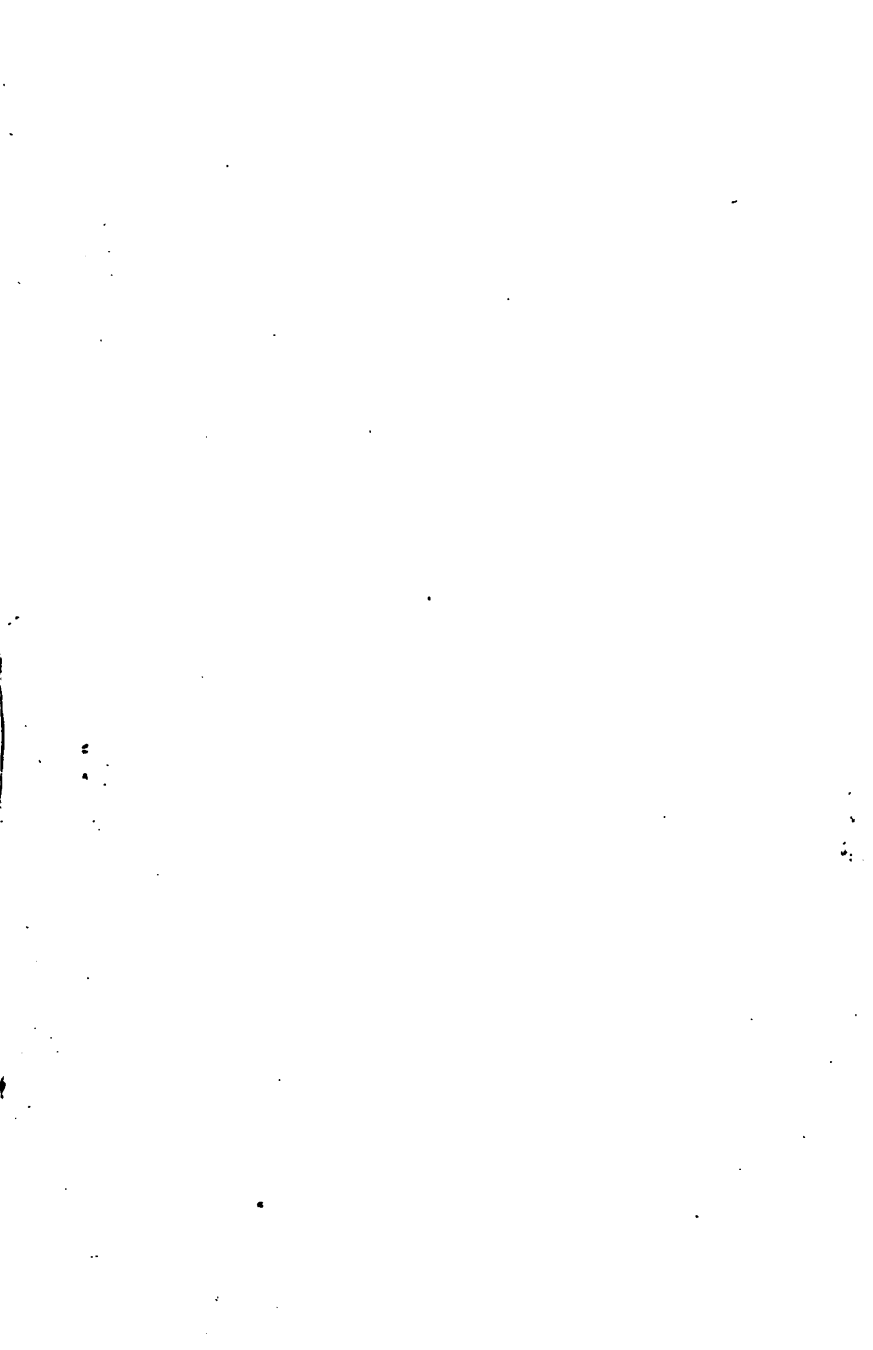
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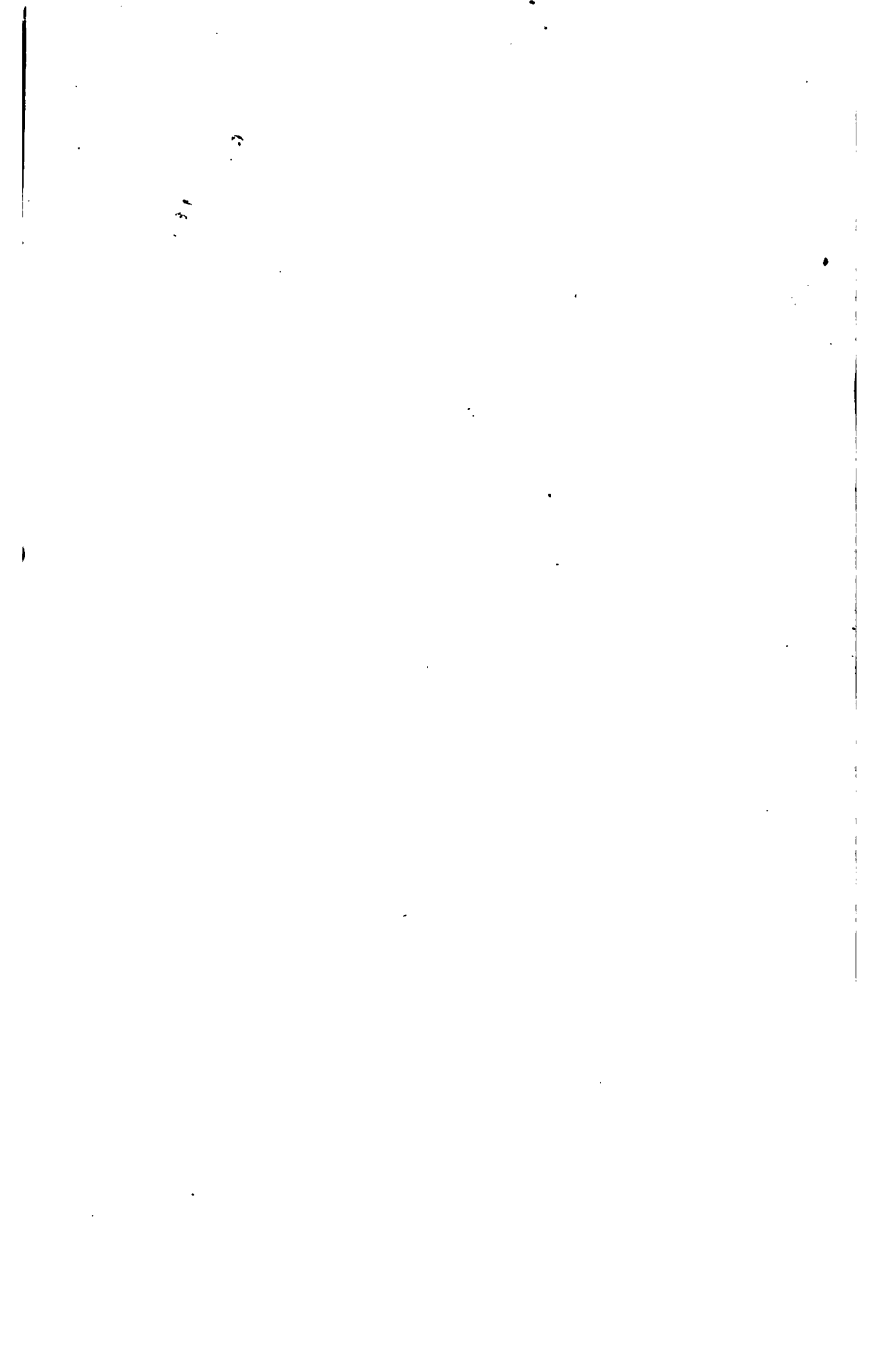
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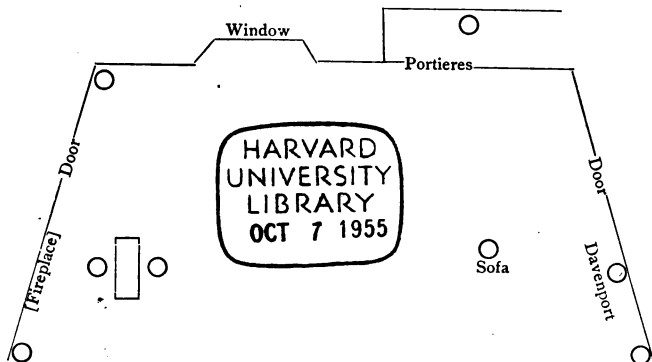
CHARACTERS.

ALDERMAN STREETT, a "*city father*."

WILSON HUNTER, under "*political influence*."

FLORENCE STREETT, a "*city daughter*."

SCENE.



Balance of Furniture *ad lib*.

Costumes, modern.



By Woman's Wit.

SCENE. — *A handsome apartment in ALDERMAN STREETT'S house. Doors R. 3 E. and L. 2 E. Large door, with portiers, in flat L., opening on hall-way, showing hall-rack. Window in flat R., with a practicable blind. Fireplace R., davenport L., sofa L. C., table and chairs R. Balance of furniture, ornaments, etc., ad. lib.*

STREETT (*in "loud" smoking-gown, is discovered reading a newspaper; he nods approvingly, and then lays down paper*). Good! That reminds me; I've promised some of my friends to introduce a bill raising the liquor license to fifteen hundred dollars a year. The saloon-men's association has offered me two thousand dollars to drop the bill, and the church-people in my ward have promised to give me the contract for the new church. Now, I ought to squeeze out about five thousand dollars, besides my regular profit on the contract, and — I'll introduce the bill. It'll be a blessing to the community, because liquor certainly is a — a — oh, durn it, I never can think of a good, big-sounding word! — a — well, it causes crime. (*Comes down stage.*) Then there's that Elevated road job ought to been good for ten thousand dollars. But those confounded papers are giving it to us pretty hot about boodling and so forth. I used to think it was fine reading. "That's right; give it 'em! Freedom of the press forever!" I said. But it ain't half so good when you're reading about yourself, and see yourself called "Money-grabbing carpet-bagger," "Tin-horn politician," and even "Thief." It's kind of carrying a joke too far. A few more good deals, and then I think I'll join the Reform movement. Anyway, this being an alderman ain't a bad business, and when my term is ended, I think I'll have a shy at Congress or Senate. (*Sits back*

in chair.) Senator Streett! don't sound bad at all. Just to think, twenty years ago I was a poor man, — but a rising one; for if carrying a hod isn't rising, I'd like to know what is! Ha, ha, ha! Another joke! And now I'm spokesman of the Board of Aldermen, and if there's a speech or an address needed, I'm the identical boy that's got to do it, and — ha, ha, ha! — the boys can't imagine how I do it. (*Springs up.*) By Jingo! that reminds me that I've got to make a speech of welcome to the Mayor of Schenectaydy (*accent on "tay"*) on Thursday. I'll have to tend to that right away. (*Exits door L.; enter door in flat*) FLORENCE, followed by HUNTER. FLORENCE sits on sofa.)

FLORENCE. Oh, but this is all so sudden, Mr. Hunter.

HUNTER. Sudden! Surely you must have seen that I care for you!

FLOR. (*with show of dignity*). What if I did? My duty to society requires me to express great surprise. What well-brought-up young lady could do otherwise? No girl is supposed to see that a man cares for her till he tells her so.

HUN. (*laughing*). What a little humbug you are.

FLOR. (*more dignity*). Sir!

HUN. No, no, no! I didn't mean that! But I do mean that I love you very dearly! And — and I hope you care for me — a little?

FLOR. (*in a matter-of-fact tone*). I'm sure I can't say. I really don't believe I know what love is. I mean how it feels when one is in love.

HUN. (*sits beside her*). You confess your ignorance? Well, let me try to enlighten it. (*Earnestly*.) First, when one loves, one has a passionate longing to be near the beloved, — a sense of desolation when apart from her.

FLOR. (*raising her brows*). So? Now, don't you think — please do not believe me unsympathetic — but doesn't it occur to you that — that — it might grow slightly monotonous?

HUN. (*emphatically*). No, it does not. Not when one really loves.

FLOR. Oh!

HUN. In the second place, one is always absurdly jealous.

FLOR. Is one? But how very dreadful! Do you not think jealousy a rather vulgar sentiment?

HUN. It may be, but it is at the same time a thoroughly natural and utterly unconquerable sentiment.

FLOR. Well, I look upon it as low and commonplace.

HUN. (*a little sadly*). Perhaps you look upon love itself in the same light. Remember, it, too, is commonplace.

FLOR. (*reflectively*). No, no. I am not so sure of that. Well, go on. Besides monotony and jealousy, is there anything else?

HUN. As I regard it, yes. I think one would feel that if one's dearest died, that one must die, too.

FLOR. (*in a clear business-like tone*). Well, now, I don't believe a word of that. It is ridiculous; it is too much.

HUN. (*disappointed*). I do not expect you to agree with me, because you, perhaps, have never loved.

FLOR. I dare say you think you know best. But you are not speaking sensibly, as I will prove by some of my friends who have loved. There was Jane Newcomb, for instance; when news came that Frank was shot in that stuped Cuban affair, she didn't droop and die; and yet they were quite devoted. Then there was Bessie Ellerby: she didn't find an early grave because poor George succumbed to the fever. Quite the contrary. I never saw any one grow so fat and so — so pleasant as she has done of late. And Mrs. Hartley's case: she and her husband were awfully fond of each other, and yet when he was brought home on a door to her, did she die? No, she only got married again. I must repeat, sir; I don't believe a word of it.

HUN. (*crushed, and apologetically*). Of course, it isn't in one's power to die, but at least one would feel anxious to die. It would seem the hardest part of one's misery that perhaps one couldn't. Now, I ask you — (*in a challenging tone*) do you think you would feel anxious to die if I died?

FLOR. (*perplexed; lets her cheek sink into her palm*). How can I say? Suppose you try it? (*Suddenly, and straightening up*). How can I think about it at all, when you are alive and well, and so very near to me? (*She moves a degree closer to him.*)

HUN. (*joyfully*). Then you do care for me? And I

may some day call you my wife. (*She starts to other side of sofa.*) Give me some hope?

FLO. I can't. There's papa to be consulted.

HUN. Yes; but if the Alderman is willing, may I tell him that you love me?

FLO. I don't know. (*Reflectively.*) Perhaps I had better talk to papa. I can say more to him than to you.

HUN. Oh, Florence — I may call you "Florence," may I not?

FLO. (*very feebly*). Yes.

HUN. But, Florence, my darling —

FLO. (*quietly*). I didn't say anything about "darling."

HUN. No, but I did.

FLO. Yes, but you mustn't.

HUN. Why not?

FLO. (*demurely*). Because it isn't proper — yet.

HUN. I think it is the most proper thing I know. (*He puts his arm round her waist, but she must not struggle.*)

FLO. Don't, Mr. Hunter; you mustn't do that.

HUN. What?

FLO. Put your arm there.

HUN. Why?

FLO. It isn't right.

HUN. Correct, it's the left. But engaged people always do that.

FLO. We're not engaged — yet.

HUN. You wouldn't mind if we were dancing.

FLO. We're not dancing, Mr. Hunter.

HUN. What's the difference?

FLO. It makes a great deal of difference. In the first place, there's the music.

HUN. Oh, if the music makes it proper, I'll engage a band to go round with me; or stay, better still, I'll buy a pocket music-box, and set it playing whenever necessary. (*FLORENCE rises, crosses to R., and sits in armchair. HUNTER follows her.*)

FLO. How absurd you are, Mr. Hunter.

HUN. Don't call me "Mr. Hunter." I call you "Florence."

FLO. Yes, but I gave you permission to do so.

HUN. And you are waiting for permission to call me

"Wilson"? You may do so, and preface it with all the endearing adjectives in your vocabulary.

FLO. I'm afraid I haven't any.

HUN. Then I shall teach you some. I have a splendid stock.

FLO. I suppose you learnt them practising with others.

HUN. No, dearest; I have never loved before.

FLO. Have you seen "Pinafore," Mr. Hunter?

HUN. What an extraordinary question! Of course I have; years ago. Why do you ask? (*Suddenly.*) Oh, I know! Fits my case, eh? (*Sings.*) "Oh, pity, pity me, an Alderman's daughter she, and I her lowly suitor."

FLO. Not at all. But there is something about "never" in it, isn't there?

HUN. But I mean it, Florence. I have had boyish fancies, naturally, but till I knew you I did not know what real love was.

FLO. Precisely the same thing you have said to a dozen others, no doubt.

HUN. (*drops on his knees*). Florence! hear me swear—

FLO. (*springing up and places her hands over her ears*). I won't. I abhor swearing. (*Crosses to R.*)

HUN. (*still on his knees. Aside*). Confound it, I wish she'd sit still! This peripatetic love-making is devilish unsatisfactory. (*Rises.*)

FLO. You say you really and truly love me. Will you do something to prove that love?

HUN. Try me.

FLO. I will. I shan't ask you to die for me, because, with your ideas of true love, you might expect the same of me, and my love really wouldn't stand such a test. I'm very much afraid I would look for some other lover not quite so unreasonable. So I will not be so exacting, but will test your love by granting you permission to speak to papa, if you wish.

HUN. (*laughs heartily*). Is that all?

FLO. (*quietly*). Yes, that is all. Some people seem to consider something of that nature a rather serious matter; I am glad you are different. You will find papa in his study. (*Goes toward R., but stops and returns to him.*) Are you sure you are brave enough to beard the lion in his den,

or shall I remain by your side to inspire you, and give you courage, "Wilson"?

HUN. No; that word "Wilson" has done the thing. (*She exits door R. unperceived by HUNTER.*) You have inspired me. For your sake I'd face a battery of artillery — run the gauntlet! Like Leander of old I'd swim the East River, — I'd — (*turns and misses her*) she's gone! — and so has my nerve! (*Rather faintly.*) By Jove! Now I'm alone, the thing doesn't appear so insignificant as I thought. What an amount of pluck and spirit the presence of a petticoat gives a man. I wish she'd forgotten something and came back for it. Although I'm desperately in love with Florence, I don't exactly relish the idea of facing her father. He's such a hard, matter-of-fact sort of duffer. No more sentiment in him than an oyster. By Jove, next to being hanged or having a tooth drawn, I now candidly believe the most unpleasant thing in the world is to ask a father for his daughter. The father is always disappointed. Whatever your position and abilities, he thinks his daughter ought to have done better. Sometimes he is polite enough to keep his thoughts to himself, but more often he expresses them, and kindly begs you to excuse a candor which he says is natural under the circumstances. And then he proceeds to a delightful cross-examination which embraces your doings from the cradle to the present time, a brief sketch of your family history, and a minute description of your business or professional standing, and the prospects of its improvement. Confound it all, I'll sneak out unseen by Florence, and send him a "sealed proposal for the contract," as he would most likely call it. I'll do it. If I can only get — (*Tip-toes up stage; stops suddenly.*) Too late! Here he comes! (*Enter door L. STREETT; he wears a black frock coat and trousers, white vest and tie.*) How d'you do, Mr. Streett?

STREETT. How-dy. (*HUNTER shakes hands extravagantly and utterly fails to appear at ease. A pause.*) Anything the matter?

HUN. Nothing, thank you.

STREETT (*crossing to table, R.*). You don't look well — you seem upset.

HUN. (*nervously; sitting on edge of sofa*). Well, I — I fear I am somewhat upset, just at present.

STREETT (*without looking at HUNTER*). What's the trouble? Liver out of order? (*Moving books and papers about on table.*)

HUN. (*with a sickly smile*). N—o; it's the heart, I think.

STREETT. Eh? Heart disease?

HUN. Well,—er—not exactly; a sort of palpitation, that's all. It will pass off presently, I hope. (*Aside, as STREETT crosses to davenport L., and looks round in it.*) Good Heavens! Now he's perambulating! It must run in the family. (*Aloud.*) If—if you could spare me a little time, I want to talk to you.

STREETT. How long?

HUN. I won't keep you more than a few minutes; but the fact is, I—(*Hesitates.*)

STREETT. Go ahead. (*Crosses to table again.*)

HUN. (*aside; wildly*). He'll have me racing about like a maniac, presently; though I really don't think I could run now if I tried. (*Aloud.*) The fact is—well, you see, I—

STREETT. Want money?

HUN. No, sir; the fact is—(*Desperately.*) I love your daughter! (*Short pause; aside.*) Well, for all token of effect, I might as well have confided my secret to a brick wall. (*Aloud, rather quickly and desperately.*) Yes, sir; I love your daughter. It would be almost impossible to have seen her as frequently as I have, of late, without loving. And I am bold enough to believe that I have been sufficiently fortunate to win her regard, at least. (*Draws a very deep breath.*)

STREETT. Hm!

HUN. (*as before*). I am sensible that I cannot at present offer her such a home as she has been accustomed to, but my business is doing well and constantly increasing. I have also a little property which brings me in about fifteen hundred a year. You know pretty well about me and my family. Now, sir, if I should be fortunate enough to gain Florence's love, will you consent to our marriage?

STREETT (*turns and looks at HUNTER for first time since entering the room. Slowly but churlishly, and emphasizing each word*). No!—I—guess—not! (*HUNTER, who is leaning forward, eagerly starts back at each word, the last bring-*

ing him into an upright position. STREETT turns back to table.)

HUN. (*aside*). There isn't the slightest shade of doubt or hesitation about that negative. (*Aloud.*) Why not, sir? Is it any personal objection?

STREETT. No. I don't want Florence to marry.

HUN. What! Not at all, sir?

STREETT. Not, at any rate, before she's twenty-five.

HUN. But that will be more than five years hence.

STREETT. Yes.

HUN. That seems an age to wait.

STREETT. Nobody asks you to wait.

HUN. (*aside*). How brutally matter-of-fact he is! (*Aloud.*) Will you permit an engagement?

STREETT. No — sir — ree. (*Emphatically.*)

HUN. (*desperately*). You will allow me to see your daughter, I hope, sir.

STREETT (*rises*). If she wants to see you, she can. But as to any such nonsense as marrying or engaging — no — sir — ree, Bob! (*Starts up stage.*)

HUN. (*smiling feebly*). My name is "Wilson," sir.

STREETT. I don't care if it's — (*A local celebrity.*)

HUN. (*aside*). It ought to be Dennis just now.

STREETT. I've got to go. Good-bye. (*Exits at door in flat.*)

HUN. (*on sofa*). Well! I have experienced about as decided are buff as it was possible to receive without the aid of physical force. A moral knockout. (*FLORENCE puts her head in at door R.*)

FLOR. (*sweetly*). Well?

HUN. (*turns*). Ah! Come in, darling. It is not well; neither am I.

FLOR. What did papa say?

HUN. The most emphatic "No" it has ever been my misfortune to hear. Didn't you feel the house jar from the force of it?

FLOR. Nonsense! (*Sits on sofa.*) What else did he say?

HUN. (*walks about excitedly*). That he wouldn't let you marry before you are twenty-five.

FLOR. Why, then I should be too old to be married at all.

HUN. Well, not quite; but five years seems an age.

FLOR. It's a shame!

HUN. It's an outrage! (*Stops walking suddenly; in agony.*) Great Caesar! I've got it! I've got it now!

FLOR. What? A plan?

HUN. No. That awful perambulating—that perpetual motion disease! (*Sits in armchair and grasps the sides as though to prevent himself from rising.*)

FLOR. (*quietly*). I expected it, Wilson.

HUN. What! Why didn't you tell me it was contagious?

FLOR. Don't be absurd! I meant papa's answer.

HUN. Why, dear?

FLOR. (*demurely*). I shall have to let you into a secret; but as there is just a possibility of your becoming one of the family, I can trust you to keep it.

HUN. (*crosses quickly to her and sits beside her*). You may, certainly, darling. (*Embraces and kisses her.*)

FLOR. There, that will do, Wilson. Once is enough—in the morning; and you have rumpled all my hair.

HUN. Let me smooth it for you. (*Half rises.*)

FLOR. No. Sit down! This is business. Have you ever heard or read any of Alderman Streett's speeches?

HUN. Yes.

FLOR. They were clear, grammatical, and to the point, were they not?

HUN. Very much so.

FLOR. Have you ever read any of his letters?

HUN. Several of them.

FLOR. They had the same qualities, and were well written?

HUN. Certainly; and do you—

FLOR. (*interrupting*). Well, when you heard the Alderman speak, it was I who was speaking. When you read his letters, it was my writing that you saw.

HUN. I don't quite understand.

FLOR. I mean that I compose his speeches, and teach them to him; that I write his letters, and prepare his addresses.

HUN. (*staring at her; in a tone of utmost surprise*). No!

FLOR. (*demurely*). A gentleman never doubts a lady's word.

HUN. Oh! I didn't mean that! It was such an awful surprise. You see, I often wondered, Florence, where the deuce he got all his eloquence from. Your father was known as "Still Bill" among his fellow politicians; he was a shrewd, sharp worker, but his conversation was rarely known to extend beyond the remark, "What'll you take"? I had a rather poor opinion of his education myself, as in the few chats I had with him he handled his grammar with a recklessness that was positively criminal. But not long after he had taken his seat at the Board of Solons, he proceeded to astonish his friends and constituents, and the public generally, by throwing off the cloak of silence, blazing forth in oratorical splendor, and making a long and really good speech upon an important measure. He doesn't bore anybody by speaking too often, but when he does, his words are eloquent, and carry conviction. And to think, he is only the proverbial jack-daw in peacock feathers, while you are the power behind the throne! Why, Florence, what a clever girl you are!

FLOR. I don't think so. Of course, he gives me his points, though sometimes I won't have all of them. But I think for once I am going to prove myself cleverer than he is.

HUN. How?

FLOR. You shall see. (*Rises and crosses slowly to arm-chair R.*) Take a pen and paper, and write him, again proposing for my hand, and begging for an immediate answer, as you are compelled to leave town. (*HUNTER sits at davenport, arranges writing material, etc.*)

HUN. I don't understand. What shall I say?

FLOR. Begin with your sorrow at his refusal. (*HUNTER writes*), and ask him to reconsider his determination. Have you got that?

HUN. (*writing*). "Your determination." Yes.

FLOR. Then go on: "I was unable to convey to you the full extent of the deep impression your daughter's manifold charms and graces have made upon me, or to —" (*Spoken somewhat rapidly.*)

HUN. Hold on! stop—stop! Remember, I am not

manipulating a typewriter; besides, my future happiness depends on this letter. All right, I've got that.

FLOR. "Or to describe to you what an utterly wretched and broken man I shall become if my heart's fondest hopes should be shattered."

HUN. (*scratching his head with the penholder. Hesitatingly*). Isn't that a little flowery, Florence?

FLOR. Not a bit too much. Besides, what did you say about grief and drooping, and dying, not half an hour ago, sir? Am I to believe —

HUN. (*interrupting*). Oh, yes, it's all right about that; but to write it to —

FLOR. I know what will please papa. Now you must praise me. Say that I am — let me see, what am I? Oh! I know! Write, "She seems to me the perfection of budding womanhood, combining beauty of person with beauty of mind —" (*HUNTER pauses in his writing, turns, looks at her and smiles. She looks at him with brows raised, and a show of haughtiness.*) What's the matter? Don't you agree with my sentiments?

HUN. Of course, I do, dear. (*Laughs.*) But it seems funny to hear you utter them.

FLOR. I know what will please papa. Have you got "beauty of mind"?

HUN. Yes.

FLOR. Then add, "and of character; and whose natural qualities have been cultivated and strengthened by the care and attention you have lavished upon her." Now, you must say something about yourself. Let me see. Oh, yes! Put this: "I know I am entirely unworthy of her; that in neither appearance nor ability —

HUN. (*protesting*). Oh, come, Florence!

FLOR. (*coolly*). If you think you can manage it alone, all right. But you saw what you got from your interview. Now, I know what will please papa. (*Turns her back on him.*)

HUN. Very well, darling; I hope you do. (*Pleadingly.*) Please go on; but draw it mild.

FLOR. "In neither appearance nor ability am I what she has a right to expect. But I am bold enough to believe that the blind god must have smitten her with some of his

infirmity" — That's a good point, and will be sure to tell; papa always likes classical allusions. Now, go on: "His infirmity, which lessens my defects, and enhances my small merits."

HUN. I don't see that you have left me any, Florence.

FLO. Never mind; I know what will please papa. Now, go on and say how much you love me.

HUN. But there isn't room on the paper, Florence.

FLO. Well, take another sheet. Stay! Perhaps it might bore him. You can write that to me. Tell him that if he thinks more favorably of your proposal, there is no occasion to write, as you will take his silence as permission to call here this evening as an accepted suitor.

HUN. (*looks at her with surprise*). Why, Florence, I don't understand —

FLO. You're not required to. You know you have just said your abilities are not what I have a right to expect. Sign the letter and leave it with me. (*Starts.*) Sh! (*Runs to door in flat and listens.*) It's papa; he has returned for something. If he finds us together, you may not have a chance to speak to me again for a long while. Slip out of the house; but you may accidentally pass the house in the course of half an hour, for if papa comes in here, I will bring him to terms before he leaves the house again. If I lower that blind (*points to window*), you may come in. I will let you exercise your inferior merits to frame an excuse for calling. (*He snatches a kiss.*) Now, go — go! (*HUNTER exits at door in flat. FLORENCE places letter on table R., and sits in armchair at fireplace with her back towards L.*) It will be a question of "mind over matter," of "wit versus obstinacy," and I haven't the slightest doubt about the result. (*STREETT enters door L. and goes to davenport; searches among the papers.*) The foe approaches. To arms! (*She does not move.*)

STREETT. Now, where the devil did I put those things? (*Goes to table R. and sees FLORENCE.*) I say, Florence, did you see a roll of blue prints and specifications anywhere? (*Looks on table.*)

FLO. (*without turning*). No, papa.

STREETT (*picks up letter*). Hello! What's this? (*Sits; opens letter and reads; he frowns and "hems."*)

FLOR. (*aside*). Skirmishers in action! Light artillery ready to advance.

STREETT (*shortly*). I say, Florence, here's a letter from Hunter.

FLOR. (*turns to him. Sweetly*). Yes, papa? What is it about?

STREETT. Hum! (*Tosses letter to her.*) You can read it. (*She reads; he continues his search.*)

FLOR. (*aside*). Forward, Light Artillery! (*Aloud; demurely.*) It seems rather a well-written letter, papa, and he is very modest.

STREETT. Hum! 'Taint such a bad letter. Now, I want you to answer it for me.

FLOR. (*springs up and assumes a joyful tone*). Yes, papa. Shall I tell him you consent, and that he may come here at once?

STREETT (*stops in his search and looks at her. Gruffly*). No, Miss; nothing of the sort. You know well enough I won't consent. Write and tell him so.

FLOR. Oh, papa, I can't.

STREETT (*angrily*). What! Do you mean that you love him?

FLOR. Yes, please, papa.

STREETT (*blustering*). There's no "please" about it. Do you think I've brought you up to be useful, in order to give you to the first booby who asks for you?

FLOR. Mr. Hunter isn't a booby. See what a good letter he writes.

STREETT. Well, you write him just as good a one, telling him not to dare to show his face here.

FLOR. (*plaintively*). I never could do that, papa. I couldn't bring my own hand to deal the death blow to all my happiness. (*Sinks into armchair apparently heart-broken.*)

STREETT (*doggedly*). Then I'll write myself. (*Sits atavenport and sprawls all over it in his endeavor to find a suitable position for writing.*) Confound these new-fangled desks! There ain't room enough on 'em to write a letter. (*Carries ink, etc., to table R. His attempts at writing, his position, etc., are awkward and absurd; spreads himself over table, grunts, spoils several sheets of paper, puts pen in his mouth, spits, etc.*)

FLO. (*aside ; during above bus.*). The enemy, being checked, attempts an utterly impossible flank movement, and despite insurmountable obstacles struggles heroically on. At last, realizing his incompetency — (*STREETT throws down pen and jumps up*) the enemy gives up in disgust, and retires demoralized.

STREETT. I'll send word to him not to come.

FLO. He'll think it very strange you don't write.

STREETT. He'll have to think what he pleases.

FLO. He'll never be satisfied with such a message. He'll come round for an explanation.

STREETT (*viciously*). I'll give him one he'll understand. I'll break his head.

FLO. (*tearfully*). And break my heart.

STREETT. Stuff and nonsense! Drop all that now; we've got other things to think about. I've got to make a welcoming address to the Mayor of Schenectaydy next Thursday, and I want you to write me a swell speech for the occasion.

FLO. (*aside*). The enemy exposes a dangerously weak spot. (*Aloud ; tearfully*). Oh, papa, I couldn't write a word; I am too miserable.

STREETT. Do you dare to refuse?

FLO (*plaintively*). I don't refuse; I simply couldn't do it.

STREETT. This is a trick!

FLO. Oh, no, papa; but I am so wretched I don't feel as if I should ever have the heart to write again.

STREETT (*walks excitedly about*). I must have that speech.

FLO. (*aside*): The enemy shows unmistakable signs of distress. (*Aloud ; very naively*). Get some one else to write it for you.

STREETT. And have it told all over town the next day. (*Blustering*). You ungrateful girl, I've a good mind to turn you out of doors!

FLO. (*quietly*). If you do, papa, I'll marry Wilson at once.

STREETT (*fuming*). Will you write that speech?

FLO. (*dolefully*). I can't; I am so unhappy.

STREETT (*walks about again. Aside*). Confound it! The baggage has got me cornered — tied hand and foot.

FLOR. (*aside*). The enemy wavers!

STREETT (*stops before FLORENCE*). Look here, if I consent to an engagement for a year, will you go on with your work?

FLOR. (*demurely*). I'll try to, papa, and I am sure I could help you after we are married. (*Lays her head on his shoulder; coaxingly*.) You won't know what to do with this enormous house, then. Perhaps I could persuade Wilson to make our home here.

STREETT (*sarcastically*). Hum! Guess it won't take much persuading. (*He goes to davenport.*)

FLOR. (*aside; moving up stage*). Hurrah! The day is ours! Veni, vidi, vici! (*Aloud.*) Shall I write to him, papa?

STREETT. No. He said he'd be here this evening, and—

FLOR. (*at window*). Dear me! There he is, coming up the street. (*Pulls down blind.*) I do hope he won't call; I feel so flurried I really could not face him now.

STREETT (*catches FLORENCE by the arm and swings her round towards him*). Look me in the face, Miss! (*Looks at her sharply.*) Dash my buttons, if I don't believe you two have hatched out this whole game between you.

FLOR. (*with great show of dignity*). Really, papa, I did not think you—

STREETT. Tut, tut, tut! None of your ladyfied airs with me; they won't go down. But you can write me that speech?

FLOR. (*kisses him*). Yes, papa, dear. I feel so happy now that I am sure I can do an extra good one. (*HUNTER enters at door in flat. He is full of excitement and joy, which he fails to conceal.*)

HUN. How d'you do, Mr. Streett. I am compelled to leave town earlier than I expected; so I thought I'd drop in to see you again, hoping to find you in a more agreeable frame of mind, and that perhaps I could persuade you to reconsider the matter. You can't imagine how miserable and unhappy I have felt since— (*Stops as he sees STREETT regarding him intently. STREETT bursts into a hearty laugh.*)

STREETT. Ha, ha, ha. You feel miserable, eh? Well, you're the happiest looking unhappy man I ever saw in my

life. (*Contemptuously.*) Bah! What a poor liar you are! (*Goes up stage.*)

HUN. (*aside*). Good heavens! I've been taught that veracity is a virtue. That story about "Our George and the hatchet" must be wrong, for here's a man expressing utter contempt at my want of proficiency in the art of fabrication!

FLO. (*comes down to HUNTER. Aside to him in a very sweet and bland tone*). Wilson, dear, you're a fraud — a fizzle — a monumental failure!

HUN. (*with a gesture of despair*). And here's another!

STREETT. And now I suppose you two are dying to have a good laugh together over the way you buncoed the old man.

HUN. Really, Mr. Streett, I —

FLO. (*in unison with HUNTER*). Really, papa, we —

STREETT. That'll do, that'll do. I guess I can see as far into a brick wall as most people. (*Exits at door in flat.*
HUNTER watches him exit, then turns and impulsively embraces and kisses FLORENCE.)

HUN. Oh, you darling! I can't understand how you worked such a sudden change. I tell you, when that blind went down, my heart went up into my mouth.

FLO. Yes. Papa must have seen it there when you spoke to him.

HUN. By Jove! I should never have been able to do it.

FLO. (*archly*). I told you, Wilson, to write that your abilities were not what I had a right to expect.

HUN. You're the cleverest girl in the world. But how did you manage it?

FLO. By Woman's Wit!

CURTAIN.



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The Girl Who Paid the Bills

CHARACTERS

MRS. HENRY WEST.

NATHALIE and LILIAN WEST, *her daughters.*

AMY WEST, *her niece.*

JACK WINSTON, *a young gentleman of fortune.*

SAUNDERS, *the butler.*

SCENE.—Drawing-room at Mrs. West's house on Staten Island.

TIME.—A June afternoon.



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The Girl Who Paid the Bills

SCENE.—*A drawing-room at MRS. WEST'S.*

(*NATHALIE is discovered seated at the desk, writing. LILIAN lying on sofa, with half-closed eyes. AMY reading near the window.*)

NATHALIE (*looking up from her writing*). Oh, bother! I haven't an envelope to match this paper. Don't you want to run up to my room, Amy, like a dear, and bring me down another sheet of paper like this and an envelope to match? I must get this note off as soon as possible; it's an answer to an invitation, and ought to have been written days ago.

AMY (*rising and laying down her book, with a sigh*). Are they in your desk?

NATH. (*indifferently*). Yes. [Exit AMY.]

LILIAN (*opening her eyes and stretching herself, with a yawn*). How we do impose on that child's good nature.

NATH. (*indignantly*). I'm sure I don't know what you mean.

LIL. (*laughing*). Well, you seem to do it as much as any one else. Why in the world couldn't you go after your own envelopes instead of disturbing Amy in her reading to run your errands? Oh, I dare say I do it myself as often as you do, but I was just wondering whether it was quite fair, that's all.

NATH. (*impatiently*). Oh, it's too hot to listen to sermons. In my opinion Amy is just as well employed in making herself useful to us as in wasting her time over a trashy novel.

LIL. (*leaning forward and taking up the book, which AMY has left on the table*). "Henry Esmond." I never heard before that Thackeray was considered trashy.

Enter AMY, with paper and envelope.

AMY. Are these what you want, Nathalie?

NATH. Yes, thanks.

(Takes the paper and goes on with her writing. AMY resumes her seat.)

LIL. So you have taken Miss Arnold's advice and intend reading serious books this summer?

AMY. Oh, I have read "Henry Esmond" before; he is one of my old favorites. Don't you think Thackeray is delightful?

LIL. *(yawning)*. I don't know, I am sure; he was always too dry for me. When I read a book, which isn't very often, I admit, I like something exciting that will keep me awake. It's shocking, I suppose, but I was always too lazy to care for anything that required concentration of thought. Oh, dear! I do wish something exciting would happen this afternoon. I'm tired of staying in the house, and it's too hot to walk. Why don't you ask mother to let you buy an automobile? Then we could all go out in it and get cool these hot days.

AMY. Aren't automobiles very expensive?

LIL. Oh, I dare say they are, but you've got plenty of money. It must be delightful to be an heiress. I wish I were one, though if I were I assure you I shouldn't spend all my money on my devoted aunt and cousins.

NATH. *(looking up from her note, which she has now placed in an envelope)*. What nonsense you are talking, Lilian; you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Here, Amy, take this letter to Saunders, and tell him I wish it mailed at once.

(AMY rises obediently, and goes out with the letter.)

LIL. *(laughing)*. Saunders! Doesn't it sound grand? There is something really deliciously funny in the idea of our having a butler.

NATH. I am sure I don't see why. Most of the people we know have butlers.

LIL. *(with another yawn)*. For the simple reason, my dear, that we couldn't possibly afford such a luxury if it were not for Amy's money. Does it ever strike you how many things in this humble establishment are paid for out of that same money? It's lucky for us Amy is the good-natured dear she is.

NATH. Nonsense! of course she would never dream of objecting. Think of all she owes us. Didn't mother bring her up after her own mother died and her father went to Africa? A pretty ungrateful girl she would be if she didn't appreciate

it. You really should be more careful ^{of} what you say, Lilian; you will be putting ideas into the child's head before you realize it.

Reënter AMY

AMY. Saunders will post your letter at once. Don't you think he has a very pleasant face?

NATH. (*indifferently*). I don't think I ever noticed his face particularly. He seems to understand his business pretty well, but it isn't easy to form an opinion of a person in two days.

AMY. I like him; he has such kind eyes and such a pleasant voice. He really speaks quite like a gentleman.

Enter MRS. WEST; sinks languidly into a chair, and begins fanning herself.

MRS. WEST. Oh, this dreadful heat; I am quite exhausted by it. Amy, darling, don't you want to make auntie a glass of iced lemonade?

(AMY, who has resumed her book, puts it down again and rises with a half-suppressed sigh.)

NATH. Make some for me, too, while you are about it. We might as well have a pitcher full, and then we can have all we want.

LIL. Why not have Saunders make it? What's the use of having a butler, if we don't get some work out of him? You ask him, Amy; you admire him so much.

MRS. W. (*in a tone of shocked displeasure*). For pity's sake, Lilian, don't talk about admiring the butler. Such remarks are in very poor taste.

LIL. (*laughing*). I didn't say I admired him, mother, but Amy has been dilating upon his eyes and his voice. She thinks he speaks like a gentleman.

MRS. W. What nonsense. Be careful never to let any one hear you make such a foolish remark, Amy. You are even more of a child than I thought you, but a child should know better than to compare a servant with a gentleman.

AMY (*a little defiantly*). Well, I am not the only one to think so. Mr. Winston said yesterday that he thought Saunders had a very interesting face, and he was sure he must be quite a superior person.

NATH. }
LIL. } (*together*). Jack Winston?

MRS. W. (*sternly*). And pray how came you to be having any conversation with Mr. Winston?

AMY. I was in the garden watering the flowers when he was leaving, and he stopped to speak to me. He talked a little about other things, and then he asked me about Saunders. I said he came in answer to your advertisement for a butler, and brought excellent references.

(*Telephone bell is heard in the distance.*)

MRS. W. There's the telephone; go and see what it is, Amy. (*Exit AMY. MRS. W., anxiously.*) I hope that young Winston boy isn't going to put any foolish ideas into Amy's head. I am told he is an outrageous flirt.

LIL. Oh, Jack is all right. He may flirt a little now and then, but he's a good sort. He won't break any girl's heart. Besides, I have an idea that he is really seriously taken with little Amy.

MRS. W. (*much agitated*). Lilian, how can you talk such utter nonsense? Amy is a mere child; not yet seventeen.

LIL. (*aside*). Nineteen, she means. It really is wonderful the way in which mother manages to ignore these extra two years in Amy's life.

MRS. W. If I thought for one moment that there was any ground for such a fear, I would pack the girl off to a boarding-school at once.

LIL. Really, mother, I can't see why there should be anything so very dreadful about it. The Winstons are old friends of yours, and there are a good many worse fellows in the world than Jack. As for his being after Amy's money, you needn't worry about that, as he has plenty of his own. Amy is such a good-natured creature that I dare say you could induce her to settle an allowance on you and —

MRS. W. (*interrupting her*). Of all the outrageous, impertinent —

(*Checks herself abruptly as AMY reënters the room.*)

AMY (*joyously*). Oh, auntie dear, such a pleasant thing! The message was from Mrs. Leroy, and she wants us all four to go out in their motor boat this afternoon. Mr. Leroy has just come down from the city and brought two young men with him, so they want to do something for their amusement.

They are making up quite a party, and will have tea on board, and come home by moonlight. Mrs. Leroy says if we care to join them we must be at the dock in half an hour.

NATH. } (*rising with alacrity*). We'll be there.
LIL. }

MRS. W. (*with pretended indifference*). Oh, I suppose I may as well go. There may be a breeze on the water, and Mrs. Leroy's afternoon tea is always good. Amy, tell Saunders we shall not be back to dinner before eight or half past.

AMY. Yes, auntie. Oh, auntie dear, what dress shall I wear?

MRS. W. (*who has also risen, and now pauses in evident surprise*). Dress! why, you are not going.

AMY (*clasping her hands*). Not going? Oh, auntie, Mrs. Leroy particularly asked me; she said I must be sure to come.

MRS. W. (*with decision*). Certainly you are not going. You seem to forget that you are a schoolgirl. Schoolgirls are not expected to go into society.

AMY (*pleadingly*). But, auntie —

MRS. W. Now, Amy, do not argue. You know my nerves cannot endure an argument. I have told you that you are not to go, and that is sufficient. Come, girls, or we shall be late.

AMY (*suddenly placing herself in front of her aunt and speaking fast and nervously*). Auntie, you must let me go; it isn't fair not to.

MRS. W. (*breathing fast, and raising her eyes to the ceiling*). Must! Must!

AMY. Yes, you must. I have as much right to go as any one else. It is all very well to call me a child, and tell people I am only sixteen, but in your heart you know it isn't true, and the people here who have known me all my life must know it too. I shall be nineteen next October, and there is no reason why I shouldn't go where I am invited.

MRS. W. (*suddenly collapsing into a chair, and pressing her hand to her heart*). My heart! Oh!

(NATH. and LIL. rush to their mother.)

NATH. (*seizing the fan MRS. W. has dropped, and beginning to ply vigorously*). She's fainting. Oh, Amy, you heartless girl; aren't you ashamed of yourself?

AMY (*flinging herself on her knees by her aunt, and bursting into tears*). Oh, auntie, auntie, I'm so sorry; I didn't mean to.

LIL. (*soothingly*). She's all right; don't be worried. Come, mother, do be reasonable; Amy won't do anything you object to.

MRS. W. (*opening her eyes, and speaking in a faint voice*). Get me some sherry.

NATH. Run, Amy; call Saunders to bring a glass of sherry.

(*Exit AMY in great haste, and calling loudly for SAUNDERS.*)

MRS. W. (*speaking between gasps*). She defied me; me! Did you hear her?

NATH. (*soothingly*). Don't think about it, mother dear; she isn't worth thinking about, the ungrateful little wretch.

(*LIL. shrugs her shoulders and walks away to the window, where she stands with her back to the others.*)

MRS. W. (*sobbing*). And I've been a mother to her; I've sacrificed my life to her. Oh, this is the gratitude one receives!

Reënter AMY, followed by SAUN., carrying in one hand a glass of wine and in the other a pitcher of water.

SAUNDERS (*hurriedly*). Shall I throw this water in her face? It's the quickest way of bringing her round.

(*He approaches MRS. W., and appears about to empty the contents of the pitcher over her.*)

MRS. W. (*springing to her feet, and waving him away furiously*). What are you doing, you clumsy idiot? Is it necessary to ruin my silk dress simply because I happen to feel a little faint, and ask for a glass of sherry?

SAUN. (*drawing back with an air of injured dignity*). Beg pardon, madam.

(*He presents the wine, which MRS. W. takes and drinks.*)

MRS. W. (*returning the empty glass to the butler*). That is all; you may go. [*Exit SAUN.*]

AMY (*anxiously*). Are you sure you really feel better, auntie dear?

MRS. W. (*sinking back in her chair, and speaking in a tone of gentle resignation*). I suppose I am better, but my heart is very weak. These painful scenes tell on me frightfully.

LIL. (*impatiently, turning from the window*). Well, Nathalie, as mother appears to have recovered, suppose we get our hats. It is scarcely necessary for us all to give up the sail in the Leroy's motor boat, though I don't believe mother will feel equal to going.

MRS. W. (*still speaking in a tone of resignation*). Oh, I suppose I may as well go. The fresh air may do me good, and it scarcely seems courteous to decline Mrs. Leroy's kind invitation. Will one of you please bring me my hat and parasol? I don't feel equal to climbing the stairs for them myself.

NATH. I'll bring them, mother dear.

[*Exeunt NATH. and LIL.*

AMY (*timidly approaching her aunt*). I'm sorry, auntie; I'll never talk so again. w. 1 6

MRS. W. (*coldly*). I wonder how long you will remember your promise. You have a frightful temper, Amy; my heart trembles for you sometimes. But now that we are alone together, there is another subject on which I wish to speak to you. What you told us about your conversation with young Mr. Winston has troubled me very much. You are very young and inexperienced, and there are a great many things that you do not understand, so you must believe me when I tell you that it is not at all the proper thing for you to talk with strange young men alone.

AMY. But, auntie, Mr. Winston isn't a strange young man; I have known him all my life, and —

MRS. W. (*pressing her hand to her heart again*). I am quite unfit to bear any more scenes this afternoon. Ah, here come the girls.

Reënter NATH. and LIL., bringing their mother's hat and parasol.

LIL. Here are your things, mother. We shall have to hurry if we don't want the party to start without us.

MRS. W. Did you bring my smelling salts?

LIL. (*impatiently*). Oh, no, you don't need them. One fainting fit is enough for an afternoon. Good-bye, Amy; I suppose you will go back to your Thackeray, and perhaps have a chat with the interesting Saunders. His presence of mind is really quite remarkable, by the way—I wonder what made him think of that cold water cure.

MRS. W. (*sharply*). Don't talk nonsense, Lilian; such

remarks are vulgar. Good-bye, Amy dear; be a good child, and don't get into any mischief till we come back.

[*Exeunt* MRS. W., NATH. and LIL.

(AMY stands in silence until their retreating footsteps have died away in the distance. Then, with a sudden movement, she flings herself on the sofa, and buries her face in the cushions.)

AMY (*sobbing*). It's all mine; the money, this house; everything, and yet I'm not allowed to accept a little harmless invitation, and forbidden to speak to the nicest young man I know. She says I have an awful temper, and I guess I have. Some day I shall forget myself and say some of the dreadful things to her that are in my mind all the time. Then perhaps it will kill her, and people will call me a murderess. Oh, what shall I do—what shall I do?

Enter SAUN., *unperceived by* AMY. *At sight of her distress he makes an impetuous movement toward her; then checks himself abruptly, and stands still, regarding her; his face twitching with emotion.*

SAUN. (*aside*). I can't stand much more of this sort of thing. Poor little girl! (*Aloud*.) Beg pardon, miss, but did you call?

AMY (*raising her head, with a start*). Oh, Saunders, is it you? No, I didn't call; I don't want anything.

SAUN. (*anxiously*). Can't I bring you a glass of water? Excuse me for saying so, but you don't look very well, miss.

AMY (*rising, and pushing the hair back from her face*). No, thank you, Saunders; there is nothing the matter with me. (*In a different tone*.) Why, Saunders, what is it? Why do you look at me so—so strangely?

SAUN. Beg pardon, miss; no offense intended, I'm sure; but the fact is, I had a little girl of my own once, and—and somehow you make me think of her. She would be about your age.

AMY (*sympathetically*). Is she dead?

SAUN. No, thank God, she isn't dead, but you see, it's a long time since we've met, and I'm not quite sure whether she would be glad to see me or not.

AMY. Not glad to see you—your own little girl! Oh, Saunders, how can you think anything so dreadful?

SAUN. Well, miss, there are reasons. We've been separated, and she's been brought up by different people.

AMY (*softly*). I think I understand. Your little girl has been adopted, and brought up in a different way; but even then I am sure she will be glad to see you when she knows you are her own father. My father died when I was a very little child, and I can only just remember him, but you can't think how I long for him sometimes. If he had only lived he would have loved me and taken care of me, and—and things would have been so different. (*She covers her face with her hands, and begins to cry softly.* SAUN. *takes a step toward her; then draws back again.* Door-bell rings. AMY *recovers herself.*) Oh, there's the bell. They're all out, Saunders. (*Exit SAUN.*) Goodness, what would auntie say if she knew how I had been talking with Saunders? Well, I am sure he is a superior sort of person, anyway, and I don't believe he meant to be familiar. I am going to ask him to tell me more about his little girl. (*Enter JACK WINSTON.* AMY *starts back in surprise.*) Mr. Winston!

JACK (*advancing and holding out his hand*). Good-afternoon, Miss Amy; I am delighted to find you at home.

AMY (*confused, but offering him her hand*). I'm very sorry, but auntie and the girls are all out.

JACK. Yes, I knew they were. In fact, that is the very reason why I called.

AMY (*in a tone of the utmost astonishment*). That's the reason you called—Mr. Winston, I don't think I understand what you mean.

JACK (*laughing and seating himself*). Why, I mean that I have come to see you, of course. I was invited to join the boating party, too, but I declined. You see, I never get a chance to talk to you when the rest of the family are at home, so I took this opportunity of calling when they were out. I felt pretty certain of finding you at home, though why you never accept any jolly invitations is more than I can understand.

AMY (*seating herself, though still somewhat embarrassed*). Auntie says I'm too young.

JACK (*scornfully*). Too young; what nonsense! nobody is too young to have a good time. Besides, my mother says—but excuse me; I forgot young ladies don't like to have their age mentioned.

AMY (*laughing*). Oh, I don't object in the least. I shall be nineteen in the autumn.

JACK. Mrs. West informs every one that you are not yet seventeen.

AMY. I know she does, but that is merely one of auntie's little fictions. She is the most truthful person imaginable about big things, you know, but she does indulge in a few innocent little delusions and my age is one of them.

JACK. I wonder why she does it.

AMY. Oh, she doesn't want me to grow up; she likes to speak of me as her little girl.

SAUN. (*appearing in the doorway*). Beg pardon, miss, but shall I bring in tea?

AMY (*starting*). Tea? Oh, I don't know; I'm afraid auntie —

JACK (*pleasantly*). Certainly, let us have tea, and if there are any more of those delicious little cakes that we had yesterday, do bring some.

SAUN. Yes, sir; certainly, sir.

[*Exit SAUN.*]

JACK (*turning to AMY, and speaking more seriously*). Miss Amy, may I ask you a question?

AMY. You may ask as many as you like, but whether I answer them or not depends on what they are.

JACK (*abruptly*). Why are you afraid of your aunt?

AMY. Afraid of auntie? Oh, I don't know; I think we are all a little afraid of her. She is very good, of course, but —

JACK. But what?

AMY. Well, you know she isn't very strong, and little things upset her terribly. We are always afraid of making her ill.

JACK. And so you give in to her and let her have her own way in everything. I see; but seriously now, don't you think that is rather foolish?

AMY. Have you ever seen auntie in one of her attacks?

JACK. I have never had that pleasure.

AMY. Well, don't judge until you have.

JACK. I'm afraid I shouldn't enjoy the experience, but really, Miss Amy, it is very foolish to be afraid of people.

AMY. I dare say it is, but it isn't only because I am afraid of auntie that I don't like to displease her in any way. I owe her a great deal. She brought me up, you know, and has always treated me just like one of her own children.

JACK. Every one knows that your uncle was very badly off at the time of his death, and that this house and everything in

it belongs to you. How about your aunt owing you something for giving her a home?

AMY. Why, of course I would do that; it's only natural. I couldn't let auntie and the girls be poor and uncomfortable while I had plenty of everything.

JACK. No, of course *you* wouldn't, but making them comfortable doesn't necessitate your being ordered about by them, and afraid to call your soul your own. I declare, Amy, it makes my blood boil when I think of the way you are treated in your own house.

AMY (*in a tone of distress*). Oh, Mr. Winston, you mustn't talk like that; indeed you mustn't. It isn't right for me to listen to you.

JACK. I only wish there was some one in the world who had the right to interfere. I have been longing to do it ever since the day I heard your Cousin Nathalie snub you. Sweet girl Nathalie.

AMY. Really, Mr. Winston, you mustn't talk like that; it—it makes me very uncomfortable.

JACK. I only wish it would make you something besides uncomfortable, and rouse you to a sense of your wrongs. Your father was killed in Africa, wasn't he?

AMY. Yes; it was very terrible. My father and his partner were attacked by a band of natives, and my father was killed. The partner escaped, and brought home the news. I was only nine when it happened, but I shall never forget the day the telegram came, and how heart-broken poor Uncle Henry was. He was my father's only brother, you know, and he was ill himself at the time, and died the next year.

JACK. And your father left a will, bequeathing his entire fortune to you, and appointing Mr. and Mrs. West your guardians?

AMY. Yes.

JACK. And since your uncle's death your aunt has managed your affairs, and taught you that it is your duty to support her and her entire family. The old cat!

AMY (*half rising, and speaking in a tone of displeasure*). Mr. Winston, I cannot allow you to speak in this way of my aunt. If you go on I shall be obliged to leave the room.

JACK (*taking her hand impulsively*). Forgive me, Amy. I didn't intend to make you angry; indeed I didn't; but the very thought of the way you have been treated enrages me so that I don't know what I am saying. Why, Amy dear, don't

you understand that it's because I care so much for you that I can't bear the idea of your being snubbed or imposed upon?

AMY (*drawing back, and trying to release her hand*). Oh, Mr. Winston, please —

JACK (*calmly taking possession of both hands*). You used to call me Jack once before I went to Harvard. Don't you think you could say Jack now?

AMY. Oh, Jack—I mean Mr. Winston—please don't; what would auntie say?

JACK. I don't care in the very least what auntie would say. It's you that I care about—have cared about ever since you wore your hair down your back. Why, Amy darling, I've been trying to tell you how I love you for the past three months, but those cats would never give me the chance.

AMY. Oh, Jack, I never dreamed; I—I —

JACK. Amy, will you marry me?

AMY. Auntie said I mustn't even talk to you; she said —

JACK. I don't want to marry auntie. Amy, my precious little Amy, don't you care for me just a little bit?

AMY (*hiding her face on his shoulder*). Yes, I think I do; indeed, I'm quite sure of it. I—I think I've loved you ever since I can remember.

JACK (*rapturously*). My darling! (*Embraces her.*)

(SAUN. *appears in the doorway, with the tea tray. Stands for a moment regarding the lovers in pleased surprise; then coughs discreetly.*)

SAUN. Ahem! Beg pardon, miss, but the tea —

(AMY and JACK *spring hurriedly apart.*)

AMY (*in the utmost embarrassment*). The tea? Oh, yes, I forgot the tea; you may bring it in, Saunders.

(SAUN. *advances with the tray, which he places on the table, and begins pouring the tea.*)

SAUN. Excuse me, miss, but do you take cream and sugar?

AMY (*still much embarrassed*). No, thank you—I mean yes, please.

SAUN. May I ask how many lumps?

AMY. Four—no, no, I mean one.

JACK (*smiling*). You found us very much engaged, Saunders.

SAUN. So I judged from appearances, sir.

(AMY and JACK exchange surprised glances.)

JACK. Miss Amy has just promised me —

AMY (*interrupting him*). Oh, Jack dear, please.

JACK (*aside to AMY*). Might as well tell him; he has seen enough already.

AMY. But auntie!

JACK. Bother auntie. As I was saying, Saunders, Miss Amy has—well, the fact is, we are engaged, and I am the happiest fellow in the world.

AMY (*tremulously*). Oh, Jack, we are not really engaged.

JACK. Of course we are. Haven't you told me you care for me?

AMY. But that isn't the same thing as being engaged. Auntie would never consent to that.

JACK. Leave auntie to me; I'll manage her. Two lumps in my cup, Saunders, please, and, Saunders, I hope you will congratulate us.

SAUN. I do most heartily, sir, and the young lady too.

(*A murmur of distant voices is heard. AMY springs to her feet in dismay.*)

AMY. Why, it's auntie and the girls come back. What can have happened? Oh, Jack, hadn't you better —

JACK. Nonsense! there's nothing to be afraid of. The sooner the storm is over the better it will be. Cheer up, little girl; don't look so distressed.

Enter MRS. W., NATH. and LIL.

MRS. W. (*before noticing the occupants of the room*). I never heard of anything more inconsiderate in my life. To drag a person of my delicate health all that distance through the broiling sun, and then tell her there is something wrong with the engine and the boat can't go out. I call it an outrage.

LIL. Well, they couldn't tell you before they found it out themselves. Why, hello, Jack, I didn't expect to find you here, and having tea, too. That is delightful; a cup of tea is just what we all need.

(MRS. W. *stares for a moment in silent displeasure at SAUN. and the tea tray, and then sinks into a chair, panting with rage.*)

JACK. Do let me bring you some tea, Mrs. West; you look quite done up.

MRS. W. No, thank you, I don't wish any. Saunders, you may go. (*Exit SAUN. MRS. W. turns to AMY, and apparently forgets JACK's presence.*) Amy, who gave you permission to order tea in my absence?

AMY (*trembling*). Oh, auntie dear, I—I —

JACK (*stepping forward, and taking AMY's hand in his*). Amy dear, don't be foolish. I am sorry we have displeased you, Mrs. West, and I am afraid I must plead guilty as the chief offender, for I certainly did approve when Saunders suggested bringing in tea.

MRS. W. (*slightly mollified*). Oh, if you asked for it that makes a difference, but Amy is a mere child, and I disapprove most strongly of her eating between meals.

JACK. I think girls of eighteen usually eat what and when they choose, but really, Mrs. West, is there anything so surprising in your niece's ordering a cup of tea in her own house?

MRS. W. (*pressing her hand to her heart*). Her own house; her own house!

JACK (*firmly*). Yes, Mrs. West, her own house. We all know that this house and everything in it belongs to Amy West. Surely there is no reason for denying the fact.

MRS. W. (*sinking back with closed eyes*). I am faint.

NATH. (*rushing to her mother's side*). Some water, quick; oh, mother dear, don't look so!

(AMY *starts to follow NATH., but JACK holds her back gently.*)

JACK. No, no, Amy, stay here: your aunt is not really ill. Mrs. West, I am extremely sorry to distress you, but there is something more which I must say.

MRS. W. (*sitting up, and pushing NATH. away from her*). Then say it at once, for heaven's sake, and leave me alone with my children. I am in no condition to bear a scene like this.

JACK. I simply wish to let you know, before any one else, as you are Amy's aunt and former guardian, that she and I are engaged to be married.

MRS. W. (*in a tragic tone*). I will never give my consent; never. (*Falls back in her chair, and rolls up her eyes.*)

AMY. Oh, Jack, we can't; don't you see we are killing her? Oh, auntie, auntie!

LIL. Nonsense, Amy, don't be a goose. Haven't you seen mother like this dozens of times? She isn't in any more danger of dying than you are. Come, mother, stop this at once, or I shall call Saunders to come back with his water pitcher.

MRS. W. (*in a faint voice*). I think I am dying.

NATH. (*supporting her mother in her arms*). Heartless wretches, all of you! Mother darling!

MRS. W. (*suddenly breaking away from her daughter's embrace*). Nathalie, leave me alone. John Winston, leave this house at once; you are a disgrace to your family, and I never wish to see you inside my doors again. (*JACK does not move.* MRS. W., *her voice choked by rage.*) Did you hear me, sir? Amy, tell him to go.

AMY (*with sudden firmness*). I can't do that, auntie.

MRS. W. Can't; what do you mean by can't? Do as I order you at once. He says this is your house. Well, use your right as hostess, and tell him to leave it.

AMY. I'm very sorry, auntie, but I can't.

LIL. Good for little Amy; she's actually showing fight at last.

(*LIL. goes over to her cousin, and kisses her impulsively.*

NATH. *sinks into a chair, and puts her handkerchief to her eyes.*)

MRS. W. Impudent girl; so you will turn against me, too; my own child! Oh, this is gratitude!

LIL. Yes, mother, I consider that Amy is quite right, and Jack too, and I, for one, am glad they have both come to their senses.

JACK. Lilian, you're a brick.

MRS. W. (*rising with dignity*). I have never been so defied and insulted in my life. My heart is breaking, but I will do my duty even if it kills me. Amy, go to your room this instant, and leave me to deal with this wicked and misguided young man. You may consider yourself old enough to defy me, but by the terms of your father's will, you do not come of age until you are twenty-one, and in the meantime I

am your legal guardian. Do you hear what I say; leave this room at once.

JACK (*in a tone of dismay*). Lilian, is this true?

LIL. (*sorrowfully*). I am afraid it is.

JACK. Then, my darling, we must have a little patience, but trust to my finding a way out of the difficulty.

AMY (*with sudden and unexpected firmness*). We can elope. Oh, Jack, don't leave me with her; I am afraid.

(SAUN. *appears in the doorway, with a different wig and dressed as a gentleman. He beckons mysteriously to JACK.*)

JACK (*hastily, to AMY*). Excuse me a moment.

LIL. (*who has not observed SAUN. at the door*). [Exit JACK. Where has he gone?

AMY (*wonderingly*). I don't know, I'm sure. I think Saunders —

MRS. W. (*rising feebly*). Nathalie, help me to my room. I am unable to bear any more. I think you had better telephone for Dr. Gray. He may be able to give me something to quiet my nerves.

[Exit MRS. W., *leaning on NATH.'s arm*.

LIL. Well, well, mother has met her match at last. For pity's sake, Amy, do cheer up; don't you realize that this is the very best thing that could possibly have happened?

AMY (*much agitated*). Oh, Lilian, it is so dreadful! Suppose she should be really ill.

LIL. Don't worry; there isn't the slightest danger. Mother is really extremely strong. I wonder where in the world Jack can be.

Reënter JACK; *goes directly to AMY, and takes both her hands in his*.

JACK. Amy darling, I have something to tell you, which I know will be a great surprise. Something has happened—something that none of us have ever dreamed possible—do you think you can bear a shock?

AMY (*resolutely*). What is it, Jack? I think I can bear anything now that I have you. Is it about my money—has it all been lost, or something like that?

JACK. No, indeed, very far from that. It is something

that will make you very, very happy, but I don't know quite how to tell you.

AMY (*trembling violently*). You don't mean my father; he isn't —

JACK. Yes, my darling, he is. The story of his death was a mistake. He was captured by savages, and for years he has been living among them as a slave and a hostage; but now —

LIL. (*excitedly*). Uncle Dick alive after all! Oh, what a glorious sell for mother!

AMY (*trembling and clinging for support to JACK's arm*). How do you know this, Jack—who told you?

JACK (*tenderly*). Your father himself.

AMY. My father himself; then where —

Enter SAUN.

SAUN. (*much agitated*). Amy, my own little girl, don't you know me?

LIL. Saunders!

AMY. You — You my father!

SAUN. (*taking her in his arms*). Yes, my darling, I am your father. I wasn't quite sure how I should find things here, or whether you would be pleased after all these years to find a long lost father, and so I planned a little disguise. I have now seen quite enough, however, to satisfy me that I am right in disclosing myself. Are you glad to see me, Amy?

AMY. Glad! Oh, father, father; I have wanted you all my life. (*Flings her arms round his neck.*)

LIL. (*stepping forward, half laughing and half crying*). And I'm glad too, Uncle Dick. Thank goodness, poor little Amy has a champion at last, or I suppose I may say two champions, including Jack. You must expect a little trouble with mother, but I think on the whole, the shock is calculated to do her good. I'll run and tell her an old friend has called.

[*Exit LIL., laughing.*]

AMY (*anxiously, glancing at JACK*). You know I am nearly nineteen, don't you, father dear?

SAUN. I most certainly do. You are quite a grown-up young lady.

AMY. And—and—you think I am old enough to be engaged to Jack?

SAUN. (*smiling, and holding out his hand to JACK*). I don't

know what I should say in some cases, but considering that it's—Jack——

(The two men grasp each other's hands.)

Enter MRS. W., followed by LIL. and NATH.

MRS. W. *(starting back in amazement)*. Saunders, what does this mean?

SAUN. *(advancing and holding out his hand)*. Not Saunders any longer; don't you remember me, Mary?

MRS. W. *(uttering a piercing shriek)*. Dick West!

(Falls back in a dead faint.)

LIL. *(running to her mother's assistance)*. Poor mother, I declare it's genuine, for the very first time in her life, I do believe. Bring some water, Jack! don't be frightened, Amy; she'll be all right in a few minutes, and if *this* shock doesn't bring her to her senses I am much mistaken.

CURTAIN

Marrying Belinda

A Farce in One Act

By
GRACE COOKE STRONG

BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1912

Marrying Belinda

CHARACTERS

HERMAN LATHROP, *a wealthy banker.*

SIDNEY CRAIG, *his nephew.*

LEE BENTON, *his private secretary.*

HENRY GRAY, *a fortune-hunter.*

MRS. LATHROP, *Lathrop's wife.*

SELINA LATHROP, *his sister.*

BELINDA, *his daughter.*

MARIE, *a maid.*

TIME—Evening of June 1st, present year.



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Marrying Belinda

SCENE.—*Library at HERMAN LATHROP's home. A window and one door with a key in it. Large screen near door, hiding one corner of the room. Desk covered with books and papers, and on it, a telephone. Several easy chairs. Bell for servant.*

(*As the curtain rises, LEE BENTON is seated at the desk, writing. BELINDA, in white, is sitting near.*)

BENTON (*laying down pen*). You certainly have hit the nail on the head this time. I'll see that this article is in tomorrow's *Tribune*. And how you've worked! What would the cause of suffrage do without you?

BEL. (*laughing*). You overestimate my influence. At any rate, whatever good my feeble efforts have accomplished is due to you. I can never thank you enough.

BENTON (*rising and coming nearer her*). Thank me? When it's I that should be, and am overwhelmed with gratitude for what you have brought into my life. I came here to serve your father in a humble capacity, and you've given me your beautiful friendship and ——— (*Noise without.*)

BEL. (*hastily rising*). Some one is coming! (*Adds indifferently.*) I thank you, Mr. Benton, for your kind assistance.

Enter MR. and MRS. LATHROP.

BENTON (*gathering up papers*). You are most welcome, Miss Lathrop. (*To MR. L.*) Is there anything more that I can do for you, sir?

MR. L. (*sitting down*). Nothing to-night, Benton; but don't hurry. Stay and chat a while.

MRS. L. (*sitting down*). It will be a relief to talk to sensible people after catering so long to Belinda's whims.

BENTON. Thank you. I'll not linger this evening, but I'll be within call down-stairs. [*Exit.*]

(*BEL. moves toward the door.*)

MR. L. Wait a minute, Belinda. There's a matter I want to talk over with you.

BEL. (*wearily sitting down*). We've thrashed this out so many times, father. It's of no use to talk any more.

MR. L. (*sternly*). It's got to be settled. Three months have passed since I received your aunt's letter demanding that you drop this foolish woman's suffrage business and settle down in marriage like any sensible woman, before January first, or else be disinherited. Still you continue to idle away your time as if there were nothing at stake. I won't have it!

BEL. (*indignantly*). My aunt or any one else has no right to demand that I marry before a certain time.

MR. L. She has a right to dispose of her money as she sees fit.

BEL. (*carelessly*). Then let her dispose of it.

MR. L. Belinda, are you crazy? Half a million dollars, and you speak of it as if it were a box at the opera! If you have so little anxiety for your future, I'll be anxious for you. Here's Henry Gray, ready to marry you at any moment —

MRS. L. Herman, do read Selina's letter over again. Belinda may have forgotten the conditions.

BEL. I've not forgotten.

MR. L. (*fumbling in his pocket*). I believe I have it, no, yes, here it is. (*Draws out letter and opens it. As he reads, MRS. L. listens with interest; BEL. listens indifferently. He has hardly begun, when SIDNEY CRAIG enters the room noiselessly, perceives what is going on, and slips unobserved behind the screen, where he remains, an unnoticed but eager listener. MR. L. reads.*) "My dear Brother: Your last letter was duly received. I am glad that you and your family are well, and I wish that I could say the same of myself. I am an old woman, and life is short at the best. As you are aware, I have spent no little time in consideration as to the most feasible disposition that I can make of my earthly effects when I no longer have need of them. (*Enter CRAIG.*) With the exception of you and Louise, I have no near kin save your daughter Belinda and my nephew, Sidney Craig. I do not like Sidney Craig: he is an idle, envious fellow, undeserving of good fortune. My wish is to appropriately remember him, and then leave the bulk of my estate to Belinda. But—I hear that Belinda has espoused this abominable cause of female suffrage, with which I have no sympathy; that she writes for the newspapers and even speaks in public,

which no woman of the Lathrop family has ever been known to do before. Moreover, I learn that she has refused many advantageous offers of marriage—Henry Gray's among them—and is obsessed with this disgraceful agitation. Now my ultimatum is this: I am coming to your home January first, arriving at nine o'clock in the evening. Let Belinda be suitably married before my arrival, or I shall reverse my decision, Sidney Craig will be the gainer, and Belinda may content herself with Sidney's portion. Trusting that you will consider this a fair and reasonable proposition, I remain, Your affectionate sister, Selina Lathrop."

BEL. A most fiendish proposition, and quite worthy of the Middle Ages!

MRS. L. You know, Belinda, that your aunt is most eccentric, but we can hardly afford not to humor her. Your part is certainly easy. Henry Gray is a most estimable young man, whom I've no doubt you'll marry some day. Why not now, thus please your aunt and make us all happy?

BEL. (*bitterly*). Why not say, sell myself for half a million dollars?

MRS. L. Your words are unjust, child. Herman, give me the letter. Perhaps you construe it harsher than it is.

MR. L. (*handing MRS. L. the letter*). There's no doubt as to your aunt's meaning, Belinda; and, while I should be the last to urge you into a disagreeable marriage, I think our friend Gray a most admirable young fellow, one fitted in every way to make you happy, and whom your aunt —

MRS. L. (*springing from her chair*). Merciful heavens, Herman, why didn't you show me this letter before? (4)

MR. L. (*excitedly*). What's the matter?

MRS. L. What shall we do? This date that you have read as January first is *June* first!

MR. L. Impossible! Why, that's — (*Seizes letter.*) I believe it is!

BEL. Give me the letter. (MR. L. *hands her the letter.*) It is. Father, can't you read? It's June as plain as possible!

MR. L. (*weakly*). My eyes —

MRS. L. It's to-day. To-day is June first.

(*Falls into chair.*)

MR. L. (*consulting calendar*). It is to-day. What can be done?

MRS. L. And Selina will be here at nine !

MR. L. She will be furious !

BEL. (*calmly*). Fate is kind to Sidney Craig.

MRS. L. See what you've done, you ungrateful girl. If you hadn't procrastinated ——

MR. L. She isn't to blame ; it's my fault. I thought we had six months. She might have given in before January.

BEL. Yes, father, I might—perhaps, I might—have given in. But it's too late now.

MR. L. (*looking at watch*). Is it too late ? Let me think. If Gray can get a license, there's time yet. I'll call him up.

(*Seizes telephone.*)

MRS. L. Herman, are you crazy ?

BEL. (*placing her hand on her father's arm*). Father, you shall not ——

MR. L. (*irritably*). Leave me alone. (*Takes down receiver.*) Central, give me 494-2.....Yes.....Is this Henry Gray's house?.....Oh, is it you, Henry ? This is Lathrop talking.....Good.....You know that matter of my sister's money ; I've explained it to you.....Well, I've made a mistake. She wants Belinda to be married before June first instead of January first.....No, I'm not crazy.....I want you and Belinda to be married this evening !.....What's that ?.....Yes, she'll agree.....Call up Horton ; get a special license.....Come to the house as soon as possible.....You're a brick !.....I'll get the rector.....We'll expect you.....Good-bye.

(*Hangs up receiver.*)

BEL. What have you done ?

MR. L. Never mind what I've done. I'm going to save your fortune for you in spite of yourself. (*Takes down receiver.*) Give me 332-4.....Hello, is this Doctor Bardsley's house?.....Yes, I want to speak with the doctor.....Is this you, Doctor Bardsley?.....I'm Lathrop—Herman Lathrop. Can you come up to the house to officiate at a marriage?.....No, it's my daughter.....Yes, it is sudden, very sudden. Will explain later.....What's that?.....Terrible cold—in June?.....Can't we come to your house? Certainly, doctor.....Yes.. ..Yes.....Yes, we'll be there in half an hour.....Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver.*)

MRS. L. What does Doctor Bardsley say ?

MR. L. He doesn't know what to say; but he's sick, so we've got to go to his house. I'll 'phone Gray to go to the rector's—he won't have time to come here first.

BEL. Won't you listen to me?

MR. L. No, I'm arranging this to suit myself. Some day you'll thank me. (BEL. *begins to cry; her mother tries to comfort her.* MR. L. *seizes the receiver.*) Give me 494-2Is this Henry Gray's?.....I'm Herman Lathrop. I want Mr. Gray.....He's just gone out?.....Can't you call him back?Good. Tell him to go to Doctor Bardsley's house at Warrington Place instead of coming to my home.....Thank you.....Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver.*) There, Belinda, don't cry. We'll have to start for the rectory in a minute. (*Rings bell.*) On our way back, we'll stop at the station for Selina. Whew! I haven't hurried so much in thirty years. (*Enter MARIE.*) Tell John to have the car at the door with all possible speed.

MARIE. Yes, sir.

MRS. L. And, Marie, bring my wraps and Miss Lathrop's here, please; and tell the cook to prepare luncheon for six.

MARIE. Yes, marm.

[*Exit.*

BEL. Now, father, I'm not going to —

MR. L. Belinda, not a word. Everything is working out far better than I dared to hope. We'll have the better of Selina yet. You've just said that you would have given in before January. Why not now?

BEL. But it wouldn't have been —

Enter MARIE, with wraps.

MARIE. Please, sir, John says he has the car apart, and he can't be ready before half an hour, sir.

MR. L. Furiation! What a time to be tinkering with the machine! Put on your wraps; we'll have to go by trolley.

MRS. L. My dear, I'm so weak and nervous, I can never walk to the trolley. My poor nerves —

MR. L. Then we'll send Belinda ahead. I tell you — Benton will go with her. Then we can all come back in the auto.

BEL. Oh, father!

MR. L. (*to MARIE*). Tell Mr. Benton to step this way. (*Exit MARIE.*) Belinda, put on your wraps.

MRS. L. (*helping BEL. with her wraps*). It's lucky that you have on your white dress, dear. Nothing could be more

appropriate ; but, my dear child, this is not the wedding that I had planned for you.

BEL. (*bitterly*). It will do as well as any other.

BENTON (*entering*). You wish me, sir ?

MR. L. Yes. I've a rather delicate matter on hand to-night ; but you have served me faithfully, and I feel that I can safely repose confidence in you.

BENTON. I hope so, sir.

MR. L. A business matter has arisen that unfortunately necessitates my daughter's being married to-night — Why, what is the matter ?

BENTON (*unsteadily*). Miss Lathrop—married to-night—I don't understand.

MR. L. I hardly wonder. By a strange whim, my sister Selina, a most eccentric person, as you know, demands that Belinda be married before her arrival which may be to-night at nine o'clock. A mistake of mine accounts for our not realizing sooner the necessity for prompt action.

BENTON. But who — ? I beg your pardon.

(*Puts his hand to his head as if confused.*)

MR. L. A most natural query, sir, as my daughter's engagement has not been announced. However, Henry Gray, a most estimable young man that has long been devotedly attached to Belinda, is good enough to waive conventionality, and Doctor Bardsley is to marry them this evening.

BENTON. It seems very sudden. I can hardly realize —

MR. L. Exactly. We can scarcely realize it ourselves. But it is now time for Belinda to be at the rectory, where Mr. Gray will join her. Will you be so good as to accompany her, and Mrs. Lathrop and I will follow shortly in the motor ?

BENTON (*to BEL.*). Is it your wish, Miss Lathrop ?

BEL. Yes.

BENTON (*mechanically*). Then let us lose no time.

MR. L. That's my good girl. (*Kisses BEL.*)

MRS. L. We will soon be with you. (*Kisses BEL. Exeunt BEL. with BENTON.*) Oh, this excitement is too much—my poor nerves ! (*Sinks into chair.*)

MR. L. (*seizing fan and fanning MRS. L. vigorously*). There, there, Louise, think of what we have done. My prompt action has saved half a million for our child and settled her for life. I feel that I am worthy of congratulations.

(While he is speaking CRAIG pretends to enter the room.)

CRAIG. Good-evening, Uncle Herman.

MR. L. (with perceptible annoyance). Why, Craig, this is indeed a surprise.

MRS. L. (weakly). How do you do?

CRAIG (sitting down nonchalantly). Quite well, aunt. Fact is, I was passing and thought I would stop in for a few moments.

MR. L. (with embarrassment). Quite right. Glad to see you. Hope you'll come again—that is—your aunt and I have a most important engagement. To tell the truth, Selina is coming this evening, and we're going to the station —

CRAIG (easily). Don't let me detain you for the world. If you don't mind, I'll sit here and read until you return. (Picks up newspaper.) I'd uncommonly like to see Aunt Selina.

MRS. L. Now that's good of you. You're sure that you will not be lonesome?

CRAIG. Perfectly sure. I'll make myself completely at home.

MR. L. We shall not be gone very long.

CRAIG. But don't hurry on my account. I —

MARIE (entering). The auto is ready, sir.

MRS. L. Oh, dear, I can never go.

MR. L. Nonsense, Louise, we have no time to waste. We've got to be on time for the—for Selina.

CRAIG (innocently). By all means.

(MARIE helps MRS. L. with her wraps.)

MRS. L. I'm ready now, Herman.

MR. L. Good! Now, nephew, make yourself at home. (Points to desk.) There's all the magazines.

MRS. L. You must stay for luncheon after we get back. Good-bye.

CRAIG. I will, thank you. Good-bye. (Exeunt MR. L. with MRS. L.) Marie!

MARIE. Yes, sir.

CRAIG. If a gentleman named Gray should happen to call, be sure to send him up to me. Don't let him go away.

(Hands her coin.)

MARIE (*looking at coin delightedly*). Thank you, sir. I'll send him up. (*Goes to door.*)

CRAIG. And, Marie.

MARIE. Yes?

CRAIG. Don't be surprised at anything you may hear. I may have to detain him a few minutes. If this bell rings while he is here, you needn't come. Understand?

MARIE. I understand.

CRAIG. That is all.

MARIE. Thank you, sir.

[*Exit.*]

CRAIG (*moodily*). Half a million dollars missed me by only an hour. Just my infernal luck. (*Starts up.*) Perhaps I can save it yet. If I could only get hold of Gray. (*Seizes telephone. Noise without. Puts down telephone and tiptoes to door.*) I believe that's Gray now. (*MARIE ushers in HENRY GRAY, then goes out.* CRAIG, *cordially.*) Delighted to see you, Gray.

(*Unseen by GRAY, he locks the door and puts the key in his pocket.*)

GRAY (*confusedly*). Why, I don't understand. Where's Mr. Lathrop—Belinda?

CRAIG. Gone, my dear friend, gone.

GRAY. Where?

CRAIG. To the rector's, where they are awaiting the blushing bridegroom. Didn't you get the message?

GRAY (*excitedly*). What message?

CRAIG (*ecstatically*). Some way I felt that it was sent too late.

GRAY (*angrily*). What do you mean?

CRAIG. My uncle 'phoned your housekeeper to tell you to go to the rectory rather than come here. She said you were just leaving.

GRAY. I must have gotten out of hearing. Why, I'll have to hurry. (*Tries door and turns back in astonishment at finding it locked.*) What—what does this mean?

CRAIG. Not so fast, Mr. Gray. I want to talk to you.

GRAY (*angrily*). Why, man, don't you know that I'm to be married to-night?

CRAIG (*with emphasis*). Pardon me, Mr. Gray, but I don't know anything of the kind.

GRAY. Why, this is an outrage—an insult. Open that door at once.

CRAIG (*laughing*). Suppose I refuse?

GRAY. I'll ring for the servants. (*Seizes bell.*)

CRAIG. They have their instructions.

GRAY (*dropping bell*). Do you know to what you're laying yourself liable?

CRAIG (*imperturbably*). I'm willing to risk it.

GRAY (*going to window*). I'll get out——

CRAIG. I wouldn't jump; it's three stories.

GRAY. I am at a loss to account for your peculiar behavior. You must know that I have not a minute to waste. Are you crazy?

CRAIG. Think very hard, Mr. Gray, and then see if I necessarily need to be insane to wish to detain you until the arrival of my aged relative.

GRAY. Why, why—I see—if Belinda is not married before her aunt's arrival, you get the money.

CRAIG. Exactly. I congratulate you on your astuteness, Mr. Gray.

GRAY (*angrily pacing the floor*). You are a wretch, a fiendish, diabolical schemer. I'll expose you before the whole world.

CRAIG. Not so fast. Suppose we sit down, and I'll convince you that I have more altruistic reasons for preventing this marriage than you give me credit for.

GRAY. I'll be——

CRAIG (*sternly imperious*). Sit down!

GRAY (*sitting down*). If you'll let me out——

CRAIG (*sitting down*). When—I'm ready. Now let's thrash this matter out. Do you remember writing a letter in the library of the Century Club on a certain Thursday afternoon of last month?

GRAY. I often write letters——

CRAIG. Well, this particular time I was in the room. It was a windy day, Mr. Gray, and the windows were open. As you left the desk to speak to a friend, a gust of wind blew the last sheet of your letter to my feet. I picked it up. (*Takes paper from pocket.*) Here it is.

GRAY (*springing to his feet*). You dared to read——

CRAIG. I'm playing a big game, Gray, and I'm not handing back the weapons Fate puts in my hands. Do you wish me to read you a sentence or two from this sheet?

GRAY (*in confusion*). One doesn't always mean——

CRAIG. You doubtless don't mean this, but you've writ-

ten it. That's all I care. (*Reads.*) "No, I'm not ready for congrats yet, as Miss High and Mighty doesn't seem overanxious to drop suffrage and settle down; heavens, Lawrence, if it wasn't for Aunt Selina—bless her dear old soul—I'd chuck the whole business and marry little Irene, who doesn't care for woman's suffrage, and who thinks yours truly a poet's dream. But one can't afford to let sentiment stand in the way of half a million." (*Puts down letter.*) I think that will do nicely.

GRAY. No one will believe —

CRAIG. It's over your signature.

GRAY. You're a sneaking —

CRAIG. Be careful. As a member of the family, I cannot see our little Belinda married to a fortune-hunter.

GRAY. Perhaps Mr. Lathrop will hardly thank you for your interference.

CRAIG. If Uncle Lathrop's going to be huffy, I'll marry Belinda myself.

GRAY. She has accepted me.

CRAIG (*significantly*). Do you want her minus half a million?

GRAY. Why—er—I —

CRAIG. There, I knew it! (*Looks at watch.*) Come now, Gray, it's time for Aunt Selina. You've lost the money, but there's yet time to save your spotless reputation. Tell Lathrop that you have been unavoidably detained, and I'll keep mum about this letter. One word from you, and I'll show the Lathrops just what a prize they've lost. (*Noise without.*) Come, what will you do?

GRAY (*sullenly*). I'll keep still.

CRAIG. That's the stuff! (*Unlocks door and puts letter in his pocket.*) Remember your part now.

Enter MR. L., MRS. L., BEL., and BENTON, with hats and wraps, and in various stages of agitation. MRS. L. falls weakly into a chair. BENTON fans her.

MR. L. Why, what does this mean? Gray, you here? We've been waiting at the rectory until we're nearly crazy. It's nine o'clock. Didn't you get my message?

GRAY. I came here as you told me. I've been unavoidably detained—about the license.

MR. L. I 'phoned you to come to the rectory.

GRAY. I didn't get the message. (*To BEL.*) Belinda, what can you think of me? Can we not go back?

BEL. (*coldly*). If father wishes.

MR. L. (*nervously*). There is no time. Craig, couldn't you do anything?

CRAIG (*innocently*). Mr. Gray just came in, uncle, and I could only tell him that you had gone out.

MR. L. True. Well, we will go back. (*Looks at watch.*) Heavens, I've forgotten Selina! Her train is more than due. I hope it's late. (*Rings bell.*) We must do something.

MRS. L. (*her handkerchief to her eyes*). Selina will never forgive us.

Enter MARIE.

MR. L. (*to MARIE*). Tell John to go to the station for Miss Selina with all possible speed. (*Exit MARIE.*) And, Benton, run across the street for the Baptist minister. He'll do as well as anybody. (*Noise without.*) What's this?

Enter SELINA LATHROP, dressed for traveling, with various bundles and a small dog.

SEL. Of all things! I found the door open and walked right up. Are you all petrified that you allow a poor old lady, arriving in the city at nine o'clock at night, to drive through the streets alone in a hired conveyance?

MR. L. (*pleasantly*). My dear Selina —

SEL. Don't apologize. You've known I was coming for three months. Don't all look so frightened. Have I dropped in at a wedding or a funeral?

BENTON (*pushing forward an easy chair*). Won't you sit down, Miss Selina? Let me take your wraps.

SEL. (*sitting down and removing wraps*). Thank you, Lee Benton. You're a thoughtful young man. I don't suppose it ever occurred to any of the rest of you that I might be tired after riding from Chicago. Where's the maid?

MR. L. (*ringing bell*). She will be here directly, sister.

SEL. I trust she will. How do you do, Nephew Craig? As idle as ever, I suppose?

CRAIG (*significantly*). I trust that I've been improving my time well lately.

SEL. (*grimly*). There's room for improvement in you, goodness knows. (*Enter MARIE. SEL. hands her the dog.*) Marie, please see that Jewel has a cup of warm milk at once, and then place him where he may sleep undisturbed until I call him. You'll find his bed in this package. (*Gives her bundle.*)

MARIE (*giggling*). Yes, marm.

SEL. Be sure that he doesn't lie in a draft.

MARIE. Yes, marm.

[*Exit, with dog.*]

SEL. Belinda!

BEL. Yes, aunt. (*Kisses her.*)

SEL. I haven't heard of your wedding yet.

BEL. (*sitting down*). No, I fear you haven't.

SEL. Well, so much the better for somebody else I know. (*Looks at CRAIG.*) Still you might have humored an old lady's whim. Herman, Louise, couldn't you do anything with her?

MR. L. (*irritably*). If I could have an opportunity to speak, I could explain a good deal.

SEL. I'm sure we're all listening.

MR. L. First let me present to you my friend, Mr. Gray.

SEL. Glad to know you, Mr. Gray. I've often heard of you.

(*Gives him her hand.*)

GRAY. The pleasure is all mine, Miss Lathrop.

MR. L. Mr. Gray and Belinda were to have been married this evening, had not an unfortunate circumstance detained Mr. Gray and prevented the performance of the ceremony before your arrival.

SEL. Was there any particular reason why this ceremony was postponed until the eleventh hour?

MR. L. A *very* particular reason, Selina, which I can explain.

MRS. L. It isn't Belinda's fault.

SEL. (*sarcastically*). I suppose not, and it isn't Belinda's fault that she has played with her prospects all these months.

GRAY. Dear Miss Lathrop, why can we not be married now? We are all ready, the minister will soon be here —

SEL. (*rising*). I'm sorry, Mr. Gray, but when I say a thing, I never retreat. Marry Belinda when you will, but I am through with her. Sidney Craig, you may come to see me in the morning.

CRAIG. Thank you.

(*GRAY glares at him.*)

MRS. L. (*in tears*). Oh, Selina, how can you be so cruel?

MR. L. You are unjust, sister. I can show you —

SEL. (*resuming her seat*). It's of no use to whine; you've had your chance. I am adamant. Lee Benton, you're the

most sensible man I know. Have I not played fair in this matter?

BENTON. It is your privilege, Miss Lathrop, to dispose of your own as you see fit; but I must say that, whatever happens, my sympathy is with Miss Belinda, for whom I have the utmost respect and admiration.

SEL. Well, you're a plain spoken young man at all events. I like your nerve. Belinda. (14)

BEL. Yes.

SEL. (*tremulously*). Have you any excuse to offer for running in opposition to—to—a poor old woman—that was—fond of you, Belinda? (*Wipes eyes.*)

BEL. I'm truly sorry to grieve you, Aunt Selina, but I've merely followed the dictates of my own heart.

SEL. Your own heart? Fiddlesticks! I've lived a lonely life, Belinda; I haven't always been happy. I wanted you to be. They say that your sole ambition is to propagate the cause of suffrage; but I don't want my money squandered for that purpose. I want it to found a home, and, if you had married—

BEL. (*quietly*). I *am* married, Aunt Selina.

SEL. What?

MR. L. Belinda, are you crazy?

CRAIG (*in consternation*). Good heavens!

MRS. L. Oh, I shall faint!

(MR. L. *fans* MRS. L. *vigorously*.)

SEL. Explain yourself, miss.

BEL. (*moving near BENTON*). Mr. Benton and I were married this evening.

MR. L. How did you dare—?

BEL. Aunt Selina did not specify whom I should marry.

BENTON (*taking BEL.'s hand*). Belinda and I have been contemplating this step for some time. I had the license and was only waiting for Belinda's permission to speak to you—

BEL. (*interrupting*). Lee knew nothing of Aunt Selina's intentions until this evening, when I persuaded him to have the ceremony at once and explain afterward.

MRS. L. You might have confided in your mother, Belinda.

BEL. You and father espoused the cause of—some one else so fervently, that I feared you would show Lee little kindness. (*To GRAY.*) I can only apologize to you, Henry, and say that

I should have prevented father from sending for you if he had let me.

GRAY. Do not mention it, Belinda; I think I'll say good-night. (*Bows.*)

CRAIG. And, as I am going your way, I'll be excused also. (*To BENTON.*) Please accept my congratulations.

BENTON. Thank you.

CRAIG. Good-night.

ALL. Good-night.

[*Exit CRAIG with GRAY.*]

SEL. (*to BEL.*). So you couldn't quite make up your mind to relinquish the money after all?

BEL. More exactly, I could not make up my mind to marry Henry Gray.

SEL. There's where you showed your good sense. (*Takes BENTON's hand.*) Nephew Benton, if I'd had the least idea that you would take a fancy to my flyaway niece, I'd have insisted that she marry you, though (*grimly*) that would hardly have helped your cause. You won't let the suffragettes get my money.

BENTON (*smiling*). Not all of it, Aunt Selina.

SEL. Herman, don't stand there petrified. Can't you shake hands with your son?

MR. L. (*shaking hands*). Why, Benton, I'd never thought of you.

MRS. L. I've always liked you, Lee, but this excitement is terrible for my poor nerves.

(*Gives BENTON her hand.*)

SEL. Forget your nerves, Louise, and think about getting me a cup of tea. I'm growing too old for scenes like this.

(*BENTON rings bell.*)

MRS. L. We're going to have luncheon —

SEL. I never eat at night, Louise, and you know it. (*Enter MARIE.*) Bring a cup of hot tea, please. [*Exit MARIE.*]

BEL. (*taking BENTON's hand*). Oh, Lee, this all seems like a dream. Can it be true?

BENTON (*softly*). A blessed reality, dear, or, at least, if it's a dream, I trust I'll never wake up.

MRS. L. (*weakly*). A dream? A nightmare I call—most of it!

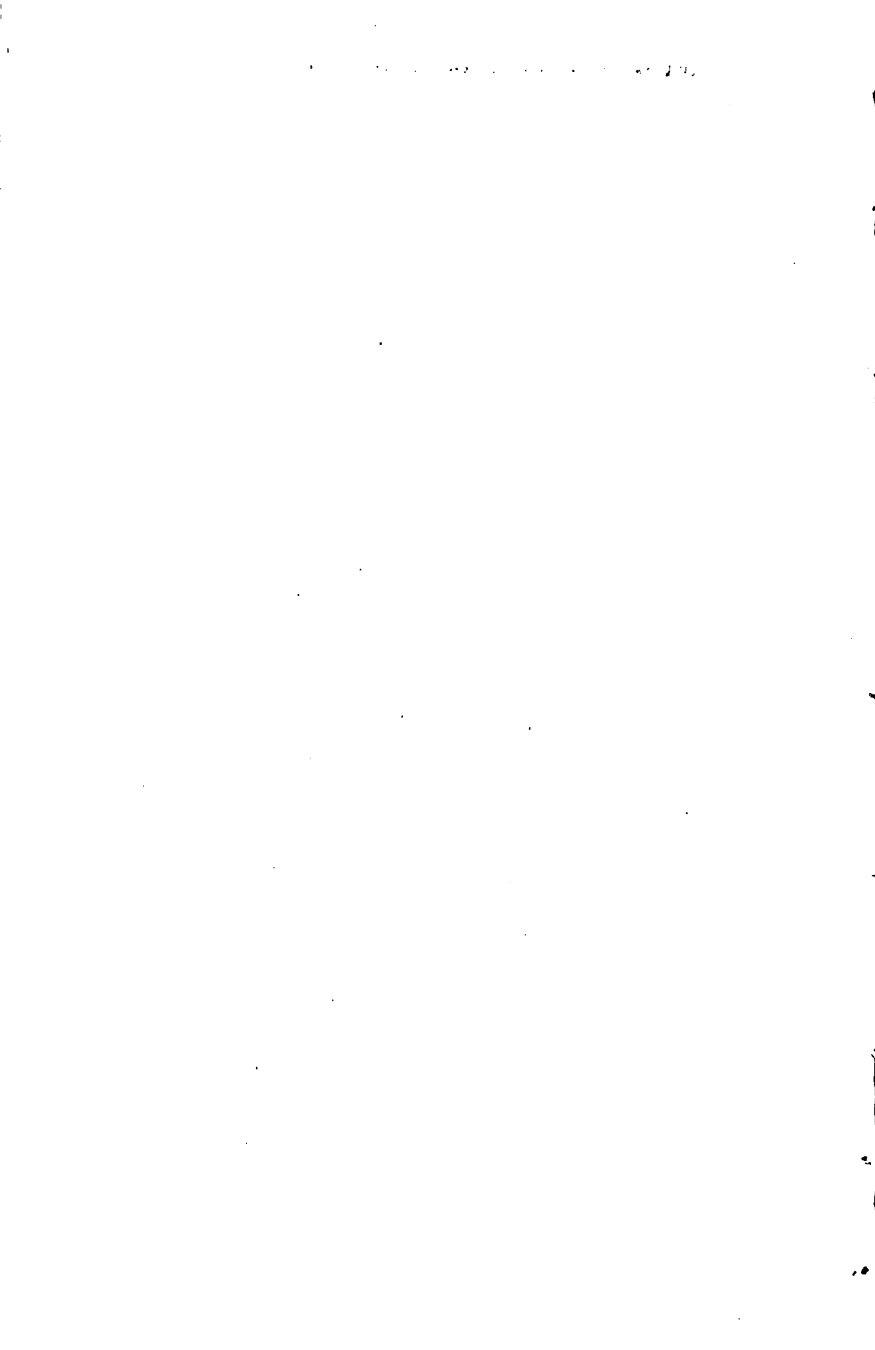
Enter MARIE with tea, which she hands to SEL. Exit.

SEL. (*sipping tea*). Well, Lee Benton, all I have to say is that, considering the nervous susceptibility of this family, next time you had better give them a little warning.

MR. L. (*mopping his forehead*). I hope there'll never be any next time, and I'm glad that I've no other children ; for I'll confess that I'm completely worn out marrying Belinda.

(All laugh.)

CURTAIN



The Peacemaker

A Play in One Act

By DERBY BROWN

Author of "Barnstormers All," "The Shadow and the Rose," etc.

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BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

The Peacemaker

CHARACTERS.

*As originally produced by the Richmond Hill Players,
Thursday evening, May 26—Friday evening, May 27, 1904.*

JACK FREEMAN,	<i>The husband,</i>	Dr. Elliott W. Shipman
WILLIAM VAN DEUSEN,	<i>The friend,</i>	Wm. Howard Brown
CLAIRE FREEMAN,	<i>The wife,</i>	Miss Amy E. Bunn
YVETTE,	<i>The maid,</i>	Miss Elsa Lang
MARY,	<i>The cook,</i>	Miss Ida Bayeux Graves
JOHN,	<i>The butler (an ex-prize-fighter),</i>	J. Cornell Brown

SCENE.—Reception room of "The Willows," the Freemans' country-place.

TIME.—Early evening.



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MAKE-UPS, ETC.

FREEMAN, of excitable nature. Dressed in long maroon dressing-gown during first part of play. Dress clothes at end.

VAN DEUSEN, blasé and cool nature, with plenty of self-assurance. Dress clothes throughout play.

MRS. FREEMAN, young woman with new-found, forced dignity almost amounting to primness. Dressed quietly though fashionably.

YVETTE, typical Parisian maid. Extraordinarily handsome. Dressed gaudily.

MARY, regular Irish servant type.

JOHN, large-bodied sporting man whose position as domestic servant is irksome. Sporty clothes and in bad taste.

The Peacemaker

SCENE.—*Interior of ultra-fashionably furnished reception room. Color scheme,—green and white. Large door with portières, U. C. Staircase leading up showing at back when portières are drawn. Small doors, leading to hall, R. U., and to smoking-room, L. D. Fireplace with cosey corners, L. U. Piano, R. D. Table with two chairs, R. D. C. Tête-à-tête, L. D. C. Other necessary furnishings—plants, piano-lamp, bric-à-brac, etc. Drab colored covers are over all the furnishings, as if occupants of house expected to vacate. General tone of forlorn dinginess. Stage lighted only by single ray from door, R. U.*

(*Curtain rises on stage lighted only from light outside door, R. Silent and empty for a moment, then a bell rings from up-stairs. Enter MARY, R.*).

MARY (*crosses stage, turns up lights and recrosses to doorway, C. in silence, then calls off stage*). Yes, Mr. Freeman, sir? (*Pause.*) Did you ring, sir?

FREEMAN (*from up-stairs*). Who the ——— Who else would ring!

MARY. Sure sir, it might be ghosts!

FREE. (*after an exclamation of horror*). Has the expressman come for my grip?

MARY. Not yet, sir.

FREE. Why not?

MARY. Begging your pardon, sir, *I'm* not the expressman.

FREE. (*after pause*). Has my wife returned?

MARY. Not yet, sir.

FREE. (*after another pause*). Who's in the house?

MARY. Only myself and yourself, sir.

FREE. That's all, Mary.

MARY. That's all, sir.

[*Starts to exit, R.*

FREE. And Mary —

MARY (*turning*). Yes, sir.

FREE. Bring me a decanter. *gamafa*

MARY. Yes, sir.

[*Starts to exit.*]

FREE. And Mary —

MARY (*turns*). Yes, sir?

FREE. Some soda. *agua carbonada*

MARY. Yes, sir.

[*Starts to exit.*]

FREE. And Mary —

MARY. Yes, sir!

FREE. I am expecting a Mr. Van Deusen this evening. When he comes, let me know immediately.

MARY. Yes, sir.

[*Starts to exit.*]

FREE. And Mary —

MARY (*turns*). Oh, yes, sir!!

FREE. Nothing. Never mind.

MARY. Yes, sir. [*Extinguishes lights and exit, R. U.*]

(*Silence for some moments, broken only by sound as if some one were throwing things about up-stairs. Another bell rings. Pause and then enter MARY, R. U., followed by VAN DEUSEN.*)

MARY. I'll inform the master of your presence, sir.

(*VAN, eyeing her silently, goes down stage.*)

FREE. (*calling*). Who's there?

MARY (*reading from card and calling up-stairs*). A "Mister William B. Van Deusen," sir.

FREE. Ah, Billy! I say, old chap; I'll be down directly.

VAN DEUSEN (*as he gives MARY his overcoat, hat, etc.*). Ah, don't hurry.

(*MARY exits and VAN makes circuit of room, lifting and looking under the covers over the furniture, etc.*)

FREE. (*calling from off*). Have a good trip down?

VAN. Beastly, thank you.

FREE. What train?

VAN. Seven-twelve.

FREE. Express? *Express*

VAN. Accommodation—to all but me!

FREE. (*after a pause*). Say, Billy! Is my wife down there?

VAN (*looks about in a startled manner*). I—I haven't seen her—yet!

FREE. Then I'll come down.

VAN. I'll be honored! (*Bows low to doorway, c.*)

Enter FREE., c., attired in dressing gown and slippers, carrying decanter and soda bottle in either hand.

FREE. Billy! It's a sight for sore eyes! (*Greet each other, c.*)

VAN. Don't mention the "parched throat," old chap.

FREE. Oh, these! (*Holding up decanter, etc.*) You see—I—er—you see—

VAN. Don't try to explain what I see—not in that vile costume!

FREE. (*holding out dressing gown*). That's not voile—it's all wool! You see, I've been packing, and—

VAN. Therefore the bar attachment? (*Indicating decanter, etc.*)

FREE. No, seriously, I've been packing.

VAN. Packing—what?

FREE. Every thing I could lay my hands on. Wife left this morning. I go to-night.

VAN. Ah, vacation! That explains the furniture coverings. Thought they were for my especial benefit, in honor of the cinders playing horse up and down my spine.

FREE. Why, Billy! Don't you know about it!

VAN. Know what about what? What am I supposed to know from the wire you sent this morning? (*Reads from telegram.*) "Billy, if you don't want me to suicide, come at once. Everything gone up in smoke. Jack."

FREE. It is a bit vague! What the deuce did you think?

VAN. Didn't think. I came. (*Reads again.*) "Everything gone up in smoke." Huh! Thought perhaps the "Willows" had burned down and you couldn't collect the insurance.

FREE. Burned down—the "Willows"! I wish to heaven it had! "Willows," indeed!—B-r-r-r-r! "Weeping Willows!" Why Billy, it's a thousand times worse than the end of the "Willows,"—it's the end of the world! Why, it's—I—it's—

VAN. Stop a bit, old chap! See here now, what's the row?

FREE. (*who is pacing the floor nervously*). Well, it's a horrible long story.

VAN (*sighing resignedly*). Go on—I'm prepared. Only don't have too many spasms while you're telling it!

FREE. You remember when I was married?

VAN. Slightly—I wasn't invited to the wedding!

FREE. Not my fault, old boy! Nobody *was*, except the lady and myself—oh—and the parson. Runaway, you remember.

VAN. Yes, and runaways never do go well in harness—but go on.

FREE. She was a dear little girl, fresh from a convent school when I met her. I—well, you know all about that—

VAN. I should say so—slightly!

FREE. Her mother was French and a cat, her father, English—and dead. Of course we loved each other madly; but, somehow, "mamma" got wind of some of my—er—well,—past, you understand, simply nonsense—and put her foot down. Claire, being French and romantic, wouldn't stand for that—so we skipped.

VAN. Passed out of existence, you mean.

FREE. Not at all! We had a delightful honeymoon and then came here, three months ago.

VAN. Same thing. No "Billies" or "Toms"; no "same old crowd"; no late club suppers; no theatres; no—oh—I believe in marriage, old chap, and all that sort of thing, but it can be carried too far!

FREE. Oh, you're a cynic! We have been a bit exiled; she was a bit shy about meeting "the same old crowd," you know; but it was a pleasant exile—up to a week ago!

VAN. "And then," quoth the raven?

FREE. I had been brute enough to blow out once or twice about being tied to her apron strings or some such rot, and it brought on a thunder-storm of tears. Well, I have been tied to her apron strings, by Gad! I've been simply buried alive—that's it—"buried alive!" I haven't seen it before, but that's it! "Buried alive"—why, I—!

VAN. Hold on! Hold on! Drop spasm number one and begin on the ~~relapse~~! I'm not an undertaker.

FREE. Since then it has been almost unbearable. It was "John" this and that, when it used to be "Jack" and "dear Jack." Then came long tirades on my past sins and habits—Now what the deuce does she know about my "past habits"? I never had a habit in all my life—

VAN. Jack—!

FREE. Er—except—two or three.

VAN. That's better!

FREE. But yesterday — Oh —

VAN. Well, yesterday?

FREE. We were driving and returned late. We both went to dress for dinner. She was a bit delayed and I went to her room to find the cause of it. It was rather dark, and I could distinguish only the outline of a person sitting before the dressing-table. I went to her to kiss her, and I —

VAN. Was she dead?

FREE. I kissed —

VAN. Of course you kissed her. Every husband —

FREE. I kissed the maid —

VAN. Of course you kissed the maid! Very husbandlike and like you. Was she pretty —?

FREE. I—kissed the maid—and—my wife—saw me—kiss the maid!

VAN. Phew! (*Pause.*)

FREE. Well, what am I going to do?

VAN. Tell me the answer.

FREE. You silly ass! What do you suppose I got you here for, but to answer it for me!

VAN. I—answer that—for you!

FREE. Yes, damn it all, yes! What would you do if —

VAN. If what! My dear old chap, in the first place I am not married. In the second place, never having been married, I could never afford to kiss "my wife's maid." In the third —

FREE. Don't talk rot! Advise me.

VAN. What did she do? Your wife, I mean,—of course I know what the "wife's maid" part of it always does.

FREE. Claire left.

VAN. And you want to get her back again?

FREE. If I don't, I'll kill myself!

VAN. Lie out of it.

FREE. I can't! She saw me straight enough. Besides, she's gone to get her mother —

VAN. Stop a bit! "Mamma" coming? That puts a different face on the matter. I refuse to have anything to do with her. (*Goes to FREE. consolingly.*) My boy, you've got more troubles than old father Adam ever had, for one thing Adam escaped—he never had a mother-in-law!

FREE. In Heaven's name, man, stop your chaff! You must see my wife to-night and patch things up.

VAN. Not I!

FREE. You must!

VAN. I sha'n't!

FREE. You shall!

VAN. Yes? Then perhaps you will be good enough to tell me what to do.

FREE. Do anything, everything, only fix it!

VAN. When do you expect her back?

FREE. At any time now. *(Imploringly.)* 'Ah, you'll do it, Billy, just this once?

VAN. Once, but not twice.

FREE. Good, boy! Now I'll go up and finish packing, so as to be ready if the bomb bursts. Will you come up?

VAN. No thanks! It is a little too near the scene of the tragedy for comfort.

FREE. Suit yourself—only don't fail me!

VAN. Not if you don't leave any of "wife's pretty maids" hanging around. I hope you displayed good taste in selecting her?

FREE. Great Lord, Billy! You don't think I really meant to kiss —

VAN. Of course you didn't mean to! Husbands never do. But there would be some consolation in the thought that she is pretty. By the way, where is she?

FREE. Oh, hang her!

VAN. By all means hang her! But where is she first?

FREE. She may be anywhere for all I know, or care. She was here half an hour ago. I'll leave these. *(Points to decanter and soda.)*

VAN. Thanks. I may need them in my new role of "Peacemaker."

(FREE. exits C., slowly, turning now and then as if to reassure himself that VAN is keeping his word.)

FREE. *(calling back).* And mind you, I won't come down till you tell me it's all fixed!

VAN. Trust me to fix it! *(He sits R. C. for a moment, tearing the telegram in small bits. Then he rises languidly and walks slowly about the room, chuckling.)* So he kissed the maid, did he! And his wife saw him kiss the maid! *(Pause.)* It's only a lesson to every wife never to get a servant

who is good enough looking to be mistaken for her mistress. (*Goes to table, R. C., and begins to pour himself a drink.*) A pretty comedy of errors! First, the foolish man ties himself up in the convict state of matrimony and is banished to this beast of a hole in the wilderness. Honey and happiness for three months. Then the wife, who is French and fiery, becomes jealous of the maid who is pretty and — (*Stops suddenly as he is about to lift glass to lips.*) Hold on! He never told me that the maid was pretty! By Jove — (*Drops glass suddenly to table.*) It can't be. No, it can't be! It can't be—that! Could that *person* who let me in the house to-night have been—the maid! No, no! And yet—yet it must be. Jack said she was here not half an hour ago! Lord! Jack Freeman, you haven't got a shred of decency—not one shred! (*Raises his voice as if to make it heard up-stairs.*) See here, you confounded idiot! (*Starts to go up-stairs.*) How dare you misrepresent — (*Almost collides with MARY as she enters, R.*) You!

MARY. I think so, sir.

VAN (*aside*). Oh, it's worse—with the lights turned on! (*To her.*) See here, you! None of your tricks with me!

MARY. Why, sir!

VAN. Come here! (*Almost drags her to C.*) D'ye see this? (*Shows money.*) It's yours if you do exactly as I say. Understand.

MARY. Yes—sir.

VAN. I want you to swear to Mrs. Freeman when she returns, that Mr. Freeman never—kissed you last night—in the dark. Oh Lord, such a face!

MARY (*mystified*). Mr. Freeman—kiss me! You're crazy, sir—begging your pardon, sir.

VAN. Capital! That's just what I want you to say to your mistress, but —

MARY. Sure, I'll not lie to Mrs. Freeman —

VAN. So! You're not to be trusted! You're a nice one, you, to break up a happy, God-loving family—and with such a face! I'll make you swear to it on paper—that's it—on paper! Sit down!

(VAN pushes her into chair and begins to write.)

MARY (*aside, as he is writing*). Sure, he's a crazy lunatic!

VAN (*as he finishes*). Now! (*Reads.*) "To Mrs. Freeman: This is to testify that I was not kissed by your husband

on the night of August the 3d, and if you saw anything to that effect it was purely imaginary. As for the screams and all that, everything was done falsely and deliberately by me in order to create trouble. (To MARY.) Sign that!

MARY. Sure, I'll not sign such foolishness!

VAN. Sign, or by—

MARY. Don't murder me! I don't know what it means, but help me Heaven, I'll sign it! (Signs.)

VAN. Is that your real name, "Mary"?

MARY. I think it is.

VAN. Give me the paper!

(Snatches it from her and, as he does so, accidentally tears off top reading "To MRS. FREEMAN.")

MARY. Now you've gone and torn it!

VAN. Only the superscription. She'll know whom it concerns quick enough without seeing her name at the top! (Grumbles and throws away torn piece, folds other portion and puts it in his pocket; then aside.) How a little decision will straighten the greatest tangle! (To MARY.) Now, leave this house!

MARY. Sure, I'll not!

VAN. Do as I say! I'll not have you hanging around to retract this statement.

(MARY turns undecidedly as if to exit, but then returns, c.)

MARY. I know you! You're a burglar and you want to get me out of the way so that you can take the silver! All this paper business is a bluff. You can't fool me, no sir! I stay right here till the mistress comes!

VAN. Very well; but if you are not out of this before I return, I'll send for the police. Anyhow, I've got your name on this paper. You can't mix things up now that I've cleared everything. (Aside, as he exits, L.) I told Jack I would fix things, and I have done rather better than I expected. A lie is cheaper than alimony!

[Exit VAN, L. D.]

MARY. The master kissing me! Ha! He's a crazy one! Send for the police, will he? Sure, two can play at that game! I'll have no burglar around here. (Starts to exit, R., and almost collides with YVETTE, who is entering hurriedly.) So! You're home again, are ye, (scornfully) Miss Yvette!

YVETTE (nervously). Hush; have you seen him?

MARY. The burglar, sure.

YVET. No, my husband——

MARY. "Husband," is it! And how many times must you be reminded of the mistress's commands that all familiar relations between you and your husband must end in this house! Here he is to be only "John, the butler," and you "Yvette, my lady's maid!" (*Curtsies scornfully.*)

YVET. (*taking no heed of her*). Oh, he has been brutal, so brutal! After all that I have done for him, too! This is what comes of marrying what you call a "prize-fighter,"—and an Irishman

MARY. Irishman, indeed! That's what comes of being a French cat!

YVET. Mon Dieu! Did not I take him from his brutal trade and his canaille friends; did not I elevate him into a high family as butler and make him the husband of me, a fashionable lady's-maid, when he might have married a low kitchen drab; did not I put on all these beautiful clothes Madame gave me, just to look so "distingue" when I went to town with him to-night! And now—and now he becomes violent and threatens to leave me, only because Mr. Freeman—kissed me, in the dark—by mistake!

(*Throws herself on the floor with her head buried in the cushions of a chair, and sobs.*)

MARY. So it was you that Mister Freeman kissed! You frog-eater! Bad luck to you, having me accused of it! (*Goes to door, R. U.*) But look out for the burglar—he's worse than your husband!

(*MARY exits, R. U., while YVET. remains, sobbing in chair, C.*)

YVET. And it's all a scheme—(*sob*)—his being angry because of Mr. Freeman. (*Sob.*) He really loves some one else—(*sob*)—and wishes to get rid of me——!

Enter VAN, L. D., smoking. Has MARY'S "confession" in hand. Is startled as he sees YVET., and pockets paper.

VAN (*aside*). Gad, it must be Jack's wife! (*To her.*) Madame——

YVET. (*rising*). Oh! Are you the burglar?

VAN. No, Billy Van Deusen, your husband's best friend—and yours, I hope.

you knew my husband before I rescued him from the terrible life he was leading?

X VAN. Er—yes. But his life was not so “terrible”!

YVET. But I have heard all about it! Those terrible “Clubs,” and the “prize-fights”—you call them that—he used to have there.

VAN. Prize-fights!

YVET. Why yes. He used to fight them—sometimes two men a week!

VAN (*laughing, as if he had come to the conclusion that she was chaffing him*). Well hardly two. He sometimes went in for athletics as far as going to see a foot-ball game, but Jack could hardly be called a “prize-fighter”!

YVET. Then he never fought battles with men?

VAN. With a small boy perhaps, or a cabby, but with men—never!

(YVET. *lifts her feet to tabaret and all through dialogue displays little actions which reveal her servile and underbred life to the audience. VAN watches every action in stunned surprise.*)

YVET. Why he said ——

VAN. Oh, between us, we might call Jack a—prevaricator!

YVET. Ah, “Jack”! It sounds so dear to hear him called “Jack.” They all call him John here. It is so horrid a name, is it not?

VAN. All call him *John*! (*Aside.*) And he said she would not stand for the “Jack”! What the ——

YVET. But all will be well now? You say he really loves me, and that there is no one else?

VAN. Nonsense! See, this paper will settle it all.

YVET. (*taking MARY'S confession*). Why, what is it?

X VAN (*complacently*). Read it—and then say that I am not your husband's best friend! (YVET. *reads it aloud, and as she does so, gives little ejaculations of surprise and dismay. After reading it, she sinks back into chair. VAN, with self-satisfaction.*) What did I tell you!

YVET. (*rising angrily*). Whatever you told me, I can tell you now that I don't believe you! It is all false ——

VAN. Madame ——

YVET. I might have known better than to believe you! You, a fine gentleman, coming as a friend of my husband to

me, a poor girl! Mon Dieu! I might have seen through your lies!

VAN. Madame —

Es me para por

YVET. Do not "madame" to me! I should have known better than marry an Irishman —!

VAN (*aside*). What in heaven's name is she talking about!

YVET. I always suspected there was someone, and now this paper proves it. But I never thought of—Mary!

VAN. But surely that paper clears up last night's affair?

YVET. What "last night"? Tell me quick!

VAN (*completely at sea*). I don't know if you don't, surely!

YVET. Tell me! What do you know?

VAN (*resentfully*). Nothing!

YVET. I believe you —

VAN. Thank you —!

Si me crees

YVET. That you are a "know-nothing"!

VAN. Madame —

YVET. Do not "madame" to me! How many times must I tell you that I am not madame to you or to anyone. I am nothing—but a poor abused girl! (*Begins to sob violently.*)

VAN (*soothingly*). So it may seem—now. But surely you cannot imagine that your husband—Jack—would ever stoop so low as to kiss a common housemaid! And Mary, too—with such a face!

YVET. Ah, I had more respect for his taste!

VAN. Now you are talking! (*Pause.*) You won't quarrel with him—now?

YVET. What does that paper mean then?

VAN. Nothing at all! You see—er—I made it all up out of whole cloth, and forced Mary—simply forced her—into signing something she didn't know any more about than—I—oh, confound that Jack!

YVET. And is that all?

VAN (*confused*). I fancy so—in fact—you see —

YVET. Then I must apologize for my rudeness. You see, I thought it was so much worse!

VAN. Well, now you see it isn't. Jack's a good enough sort and all that, but you know he can't manage these little affairs as well as—some of us.

YVET. We only had a very little tiff this morning —

VAN. And he led me to believe it was terrible! But you'll see him now, and it will be all right?

YVET. But you must not make it too easy for him.

VAN. Trust me for that! (*Pause.*) Did you bring your mother with you?

YVET. Mother! I have no mother, monsieur. She is buried—in Paris.

VAN. Ah, forgive me! (*Aside.*) Damn Jack!

YVET. (*as something falls up-stairs.*) What is that!

VAN. Why, Jack.

YVET. Here? Up-stairs?

VAN. Yes, arranging some of his things. (*Goes up stage.*)

YVET. (*aside.*) Arranging his things! I hope he is not stealing some of his master's things!

VAN. Now, if you will allow me to have a few words with your husband before you see him? Come back directly and then I hope to see you fall into each other's arms and, like the lovers in the play, live happily ever after.

YVET. Ah, you are so "cherie"!

VAN. Cherry, yes, cherry, that describes me exactly! (*As she starts to exit.*) Hold on, I want to ask you a question.

YVET. A thousand if you like.

VAN. Is your husband crazy —?

YVET. Why —

VAN. Or are you crazy?

YVET. I think not. Why —?

VAN. Nothing—only someone *must* be crazy, but I guess I'm it.

YVET. (*laughing.*) Then "au revoir," Monsieur Van Deusen—"Billie"!

[*Blows a kiss and exits coquettishly, R. U.*]

VAN. "Billie"! Phew! His wife—me—the paper—the maid—Jack! What in heaven's name does it all mean? Are they all raving mad or is it myself? And the old boy is such an unmitigable liar! (*Goes up stage calling.*) Jack! Jack!

FREE. (*from up-stairs; meekly.*) Yes, Billy?

VAN. "Come down from there, my evening star!"

FREE. Is she there?

VAN. Not now.

FREE. Have you seen her?

VAN. Have I seen her? Well I fancy yes!

FREE. Did she boil you in oil and eat you?

VAN. Well, hardly! Oh, come off!

FREE. Coming! (*Enter FREE., C.; VAN stands R. D. in*

self-satisfied pose. FREE. *comes down stage nervously; looking searchingly about.*) None of the furniture broken; all of your hair with you still—Billy, you *are* a lion tamer!

VAN. Cut that now! The abused husband game don't go down any longer—with me!

FREE. Don't go down! I'm not trying to make it go down. You've seen her—that's convincing enough in itself.

VAN. Convincing—yes—that your wife is the jolliest little woman in the world!

FREE. What ——!

VAN. But you didn't tell me she was quite so—er—so delightfully—er—French.

FREE. French by birth—but she's English; as English as a hansom cab—cold and straight laced.

VAN. Quit it! You can't make me believe she's a prude—after this! Why, she's the jolliest ever!

FREE. Is she? See here, are you trying to make me believe I don't know my own wife?

VAN. No, but you are trying to keep everyone else from knowing her.

FREE. I never ——

VAN. Oh, I'm too old a hand at the game to be bluffed! You're jealous—wildly, insanely jealous! It's all in your eye.

FREE. Then the affair last night ——?

VAN. You must have dreamed it. She either didn't see you or has forgotten it.

FREE. Forgotten! You don't know her! She couldn't forget anything!

VAN. But she has though. And she's quite ready to fall into your arms or my arms or anybody's arms and kiss and make up.

FREE. Huh! She's got you fooled!

VAN. What! A woman—fool me?

FREE. Why not? What do you bachelors know about women?

VAN. Ah, we know all about women—that's the reason we are bachelors. She's waiting now—down-stairs.

FREE. (*timidly*). Down-stairs! The old lady too?

VAN (*seriously*). Jack! You ought to know better than to jest about such a matter! Your wife's mother is dead.

FREE. Dead! Now you're trying to make me believe I don't know my wife's family! I wish to heaven you could!

VAN. She's buried in Paris ——

FREE. Buried—in Paris! She wrote to my wife, two days ago—from New York!

VAN. There's something wrong there!

FREE. I should say there was! If I have got to stand a spook mother-in-law after the real article—it's the last straw!

VAN. Oh, I see through you! You——

MARY (*from outside*). He's just come down-stairs, Mrs. Freeman, ma'am.

FREE. (*in a scared whisper to VAN*). What's that ——!

VAN. Your wife—coming to make up—just as I told you.

FREE. Say old chap—don't leave me!

VAN. Ha! Guilty conscience, that's all the matter with you!

FREE. (*glancing nervously towards door*). Won't you stay? You see, if she was so deucedly pleasant to you, she may put a little onto my account if she sees you hanging around.

VAN. No thanks! But you'd better look sharp. If I'd known her a year ago, she'd never have been Mrs. Freeman!

FREE. You don't say.

VAN. But it's no affair of mine—now. I'll go out and smoke——

FREE. Go ahead, hang you!

VAN. And I'll expect to see you in each other's arms when I return.

[VAN starts to exit, L. D.

FREE. Oh, I say! There are some cigars on the table in there. She gave them to me—you may be able to smoke them.

VAN. Thanks, awfully.

[Exits, L. D.

FREE. (*as he is left alone, makes business of loosening collar, etc., to show nervousness*). Now for it!

Enter MRS. FREE., C. Looks surprised as she sees FREE., and, as his back is towards her, comes down stage as if to greet him lovingly, but stops half way down, haughtily.

CLAIRE (*coldly*). Well!

FREE. (*without turning*). Well?

CLAIRE. Well!

FREE. You said that before.

CLAIRE. Must I still bear these insults in my own house——?

FREE. My house, my dear, my house.

CLAIRE (*as she comes C*). Your house, indeed——

FREE. (*turning imploringly*). Now please don't go off the

handle now, Claire! Billy has seen you—it's all fixed—and we're to fall into each other's arms again.

CLAIRE. Oh, we are! And who told you all this?

FREE. Why, Billy, of course!

CLAIRE. And who is "Billy," pray?

FREE. Why, Billy—Billy Van Deusen—you have seen him! Have —

CLAIRE. Is that Van Deusen person in this house! I thought you agreed not to —

FREE. Why, you were talking to him, here, not half an hour ago!

CLAIRE. I was!

FREE. Why yes. He said—you said—he said —

CLAIRE. Then it is very proper that we should separate, if you are going back to your old life and your fast friends with —oh, it is easy to see that you are half intoxicated now! I suppose the affair with my French maid was only the beginning!

FREE. Now don't talk like that!

CLAIRE. Then what do you mean by bringing that person in this house when you know I dislike him and —

FREE. You mean to say you haven't seen him and talked to him—here!

CLAIRE. Do you imagine that you are being funny?

FREE. Then we all must be dreaming!

CLAIRE. Yes, a horrible, real dream.

FREE. That's it—we've been dreaming! Let's call it that. But let's wake up now. It has been such a terrible dream, Claire, dearest.

CLAIRE. It looks as if it had been "terrible"—with all these things about! (*Indicating decanters, etc.*)

FREE. Oh, those—those are on account of Billy.

CLAIRE (*as she picks up handkerchief from under chair*). And I suppose this is also "on account of Billy"?

FREE. His handkerchief! Why, he must have dropped it.

CLAIRE. Very likely! (*As she points to name on handkerchief*.) And is his name "Yvette" as well as "Billy"? It is a coincidence that he should have the same name as my maid! Really, Mr. Freeman, there is one thing in your favor—you could never succeed as a criminal; you leave too much evidence behind you!

FREE. Now, I say —

CLAIRE. Now don't say it was "Billy" kissed Yvette last night!

FREE. Do you expect me to try and lie out of it!

CLAIRE. Of course not! You haven't half a chance.

FREE. I don't deny that I kissed Yvette, but —

CLAIRE. Nobly confessed! Especially as you know I saw you. But how many times were there when I did not see you? Would —

FREE. Don't!

CLAIRE. Would you be so noble as to confess how long these proceedings have been going on —

FREE. Don't!

CLAIRE. Wives are always secondary considerations to men like you —

FREE. Don't—you hear me—stop! This ridiculous affair has gone far enough! I send a friend to you to explain matters, but you deny ever having seen him and go on chattering nonsense about house-maids and such rot, while I stand here taking it all, like the fool I am. But I won't have any more of it—you hear! I've told you once it is all a frightful mistake. Believe it or not, as you will; but if you don't—ah, Claire, can't you see what you are doing? You are hurting more than my feelings or yours; you are killing something infinitely greater than yourself or myself—you are killing love—and when you have done that, all for a parcel of silly talk,—well, the game is hardly worth the candle, is it?

CLAIRE (*a bit awed*). It's all your fault —

FREE. Yes, that's always the way! When anything goes wrong with a woman, she says "It's all your fault," and expects every trouble to run away. But it won't do here! It isn't a question of where the fault lies, it is a question of remedying that fault before it is too late. And the only way now is to forgive and forget. Love is the greatest consideration, isn't it, dear—for it will be too late when love is gone!

CLAIRE. Ah, Jack, if I could only believe—no, but I won't! It is all very well for you to say "forgive and forget" when you yourself are at fault. How can I believe —

FREE. Don't believe! I simply ask it. You may do as you will. I shall say nothing more.

CLAIRE. If you only would explain —

FREE. I have, as far as I myself know. If you cannot place me above suspicion in your heart, there is little use in explaining further. I have played a cringing part too long.

When you are willing to come to me and place your hand in mine and say "Jack, I believe you,"—then will I explain, and not until then.

CLAIRE. Jack —— !

FREE. Are you ready to believe me ?

CLAIRE. Until you explain—no.

FREE. Very well —— (*Comes down stage, leaving her*
U. C.) Good-bye !

CLAIRE. Jack ! (*Plaintively.*) Won't you tell me how ——

FREE. (*sternly.*) Good-bye !

CLAIRE. Good-bye. [*Exit* CLAIRE, C.

FREE. (*after a pause, rushes up stage calling.*) Claire !
Claire !

(*Stops abruptly at door C., buries his face in arm against wall and sobs convulsively.*)

Enter VAN, L. D., *whistling.*

VAN. I am going to put "P. M." after my name—for "Peacemaker," you know. (*As he sees* FREE.) Why, old chap, what's up ?

FREE. Put "A-S-S" after your name, for meddler, would be better !

VAN. Thanks for the suggestion. Where's your wife ?

FREE. Gone, thanks to you !

VAN. Gone ! Why, you were "making up" a moment ago !

FREE. And we would have, had it not been for you and your beastly reputation !

VAN. Reputation—ha—that's bully ! "When the Devil was sick, the Devil a Monk would be,"—but this monk is not that sort of a devil. When I get in a fix, I don't try to flunk the consequences. By the way, *she* didn't say much about "reputation" when I saw her here !

FREE. See here, what's your game ? You know well enough you didn't see her.

VAN. (*taken aback.*) I didn't *see* her —— !

FREE. So she says. (*Pause.*) I believe it is a conspiracy, hatched up between you and my wife, to get rid of me ! What else would be your object in lying ?

VAN. I wouldn't say that !

FREE. I do though,—that you deliberately lied to me !

VAN. Yes ? Then will you be kind enough to ring for my hat and coat !

FREE. No, no,—not that! I can't lose you too! In heaven's name explain!

VAN. If you cannot place me above suspicion, there is little use in explanations.

FREE. I'm all at sea! My wife won't believe me—says she never saw you here!

VAN. What——! (*Aside.*) Good Lord! Suppose she took a fancy to me and wants to get a divorce from him! (*To FREE.*) Poor old boy!

FREE. And now the only thing worth living for—love—is dead.

VAN. If love is dead, for goodness sake bury it! Don't carry its ashes around to nauseate every one. I'm as much at sea as you are. I certainly saw and talked with your wife here to-night; but explain further than that, I won't—because I can't.

FREE. Billy, you're a brick! (*Reaches to take his hand.*)

VAN (*placing both hands behind him*). You've called me a hard name to-night, but I'll stick by you till you can take it back, old chap.

FREE. Well, you needn't be so grumpy, seeing it's all your fault.

VAN. Ah, I forgot to tell you, I heard part of your conversation with your wife,—you yelled so.

FREE. It must have been interesting!

VAN. It was—and instructive. You said: "When anything goes wrong with a woman, she says, 'It's all your fault' and expects every trouble to fly away."

FREE. Oh, forget her! Come out and have a smoke. Here—— (*Offers him a cigar.*)

VAN. If they are the same kind you gave me a while ago, not for me! Did your wife give you those to break you of your smoking habits?

[FREE. and VAN *exceunt*, L. D.]

Enter JOHN, the butler, and YVET., R. U., hurriedly as if quarreling.

JOHN (*harshly*). Give me that paper!

YVET. Ah, I fancy not!

JOHN. Then tell me where you got it.

YVET. Easily done,—from your dear friend Van Deusen, my lord and master! (*Curtsies mockingly.*)

JOHN. Van Deusen! I ain't got any friend with such a fancy name.

YVET. Never knew Van Deusen, eh! Well he knew all about you—and more than I ever suspected! (*Laughing.*) He thought that he was doing you a good turn by making Mary sign this paper, but he let the cat out of the bag. (*Reading.*) “This is to testify that I was not kissed by your husband — Mary.” Why it is better than a confession! (*Reads again.*) This is to —

JOHN. Don't read that stuff again! Cut it out! See here, you've run up next to a game of jolly —!

YVET. Jolly, is it! You, an upper servant, “Monsieur Jack,” the butler, kissing a common cook! I gave you credit for better taste!

JOHN. You know how I hate her —!

YVET. Hate her? Cleverly acted, that hating!

JOHN. Oh! (*Groans and goes up stage.*)

YVET. (*aside.*) I told Van Deusen I would not let my husband off too easily!

JOHN (*coming down stage*). Come, forget it! I'll let that last night's racket with the boss pass if you'll give me that paper and quit. It's all —

YVET. Oh, I am not so anxious to forget. There is still your friend Van Deusen, and he is charming—and a gentleman.

JOHN. See here, I don't know any “Van Deusen,” but if I ever spot one—I'll decorate him, that's all, I'll decorate him! (*Rolls up sleeves.*)

YVET. You! You couldn't hurt any one—except perhaps a small boy! Van Deusen said so.

JOHN. He did, did he! (*Pause.*) Say, is there anything up between you and—whoever he is? For if there is—I'll — (*Grasps her wrist and pulls her to him roughly.*)

YVET. Jack, you hurt!

JOHN. I mean to, you —

YVET. Let go of my arm!

JOHN. Not till you tell me —

YVET. Let go!

JOHN. If you have been fooling me —!

YVET. Let go!

(*Breaks away from him, rushes up stage, turns off lights and exits R. U., slamming door in JOHN'S face as he pursues her.*)

JOHN. You —! Oh, I know her kind; she's trying to

fool me. I'll wait here in the dark; she'll be back soon enough and I'll surprise her. (*Sits in tête-à-tête, c.*)

(*Stage is almost totally dark. MRS. FREE. enters through folding doors, U. C., pulling back portières just enough to show her to audience, but not to light the rest of stage.*)

CLAIRE. And he said: "When you are willing to come to me and place your hand in mine and say, 'Jack, I believe you,' then will I explain—and not until then." Oh, I know I am foolish to give in to him—but there is so much at stake! (*Aloud, coming down stage.*) Jack?

JOHN (*aside*). I knew she'd be back.

CLAIRE. Jack!

JOHN. Yes?

CLAIRE. I believe you.

JOHN. You believe me!

CLAIRE. Where are you?

JOHN. Over here.

CLAIRE. And it's all a mistake?

JOHN. Sure! We're both fools.

CLAIRE. And you didn't mean to be cross?

JOHN. Of course not!

CLAIRE. Will you kiss me—now?

JOHN. Will I — ? As my name is John!

CLAIRE (*as she kneels at his feet, c.*). Oh, Jack!

JOHN. I'll sling up this butler's job to-morrow! (*Kisses her.*)

CLAIRE. Butler! (*Screams.*)

(*Lights suddenly rise, disclosing MRS. FREE. in JOHN'S arms, c.; VAN and FREE., L. C.; and YVET. and MARY, R. C.*)

FREE. So!

CLAIRE. My husband! (*Rushes to FREE.*)

YVET. My husband! (*Rushes to JOHN.*)

VAN. My eye, what a mess! Your husband—your wife! Her husband—his wife! And who the deuce is *she*? (*Points to CLAIRE.*)

FREE. My wife, fool!

VAN. And she? (*Points to YVET.*)

FREE. The maid, idiot!

VAN. And she? (*Points to MARY.*)

MARY. The cook, Mister Burglar!

FREE. (to MARY). Leave the room !

MARY. That I will—and the house, this very night !

[Exit MARY, R. U.]

CLAIRE (to FREE.). Jack, who is that—gentleman !

VAN (bowing). The Goat, Madame, the Goat !

YVET. (to VAN). "Billy" —— !

VAN. Billy ! (Turning away from her). I have not the "honor" of your acquaintance !

FREE. (to YVET.). Leave the room, girl !

YVET. (to CLAIRE). You may search for a new maid, madame !

[Exit YVET., R. U.]

JOHN (coming towards VAN, ferociously). Are you Van Deusen ?

VAN (absently). Van Deusen ? Ah yes, Van Deusen.

JOHN. Well, I'll —— !

FREE. (to JOHN). Leave the room, you !

JOHN. And you can get a new butler, sir !

[Exit JOHN, R. U.]

FREE. (to CLAIRE). And now for you,—woman !

CLAIRE. Jack, I ——

FREE. Explain !

VAN (coming down c., between them). Oh, now—I say ! Don't go and mix everything all up again, after I have fixed matters so beautifully !

FREE. I should say you had "fixed" things !

VAN. My little blunder was all your fault—for leaving me alone with so many unIntroduced females. How was I to tell who was the wife, the maid, or the cook ?

FREE. But my wife —— !

VAN. Heaven forgive me, I took the maid for your wife.

CLAIRE. Sir —— !

VAN. And I have never had the privilege of meeting your wife, till this very moment. (To CLAIRE.) Madame, I am your hated friend Van Deusen ——

FREE. But I want an explanation from this—woman ! Why ——

VAN. Ah now ! hasn't this little experience taught you that you can never explain by making explanations ? Now, take it that you (to CLAIRE) kissed the butler on purpose ——

FREE. and CLAIRE. What ——

VAN. Just "suppose," you know. And take it that you (to FREE.) intentionally kissed the maid ——

FREE. See here now — !

VAN. Not a word ! Don't you see — If he ever should say "Butler," you can say "Maid" ; and if she ever should say "Maid," you can retaliate with "Butler" ! And I warrant neither of you will say anything.

FREE. I —

VAN. It's a continuous "check," with the "mate" on the one who moves first ! And I want to give you a word of advice : Never exclude your best friend (*bows*) from the family circle. (*Goes up stage pulling the coverings off furniture unseen.*)

FREE. (*to CLAIRE*). But I —

CLAIRE. Ah Jack, there is no need for explanations now, dear. All our troubles have come from the one thing—doubt—magnified a thousand times.

FREE. I suppose we have made a mole-hill into a mountain. But we will forget it all now !

CLAIRE. And pluck the "green" from our eyes ! (*As she sees VAN taking covers off furniture.*) Why, Mr. Van Deusen, what are you doing !

VAN (*coming down c., a cover in each of his hands*). As I have decided that you had better stay the summer out here, you won't need these hideous things over all the stuff. Besides, as your best friend is going to make you a little visit, he would like to see the color of your furniture !

CURTAIN.

BEFORE BREAKFAST

31.1.11

BEFORE BREAKFAST

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By
GITHA SOWERBY

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NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
PUBLISHER,
28-30 WEST 38TH STREET

LONDON
SAMUEL FRENCH LTD
26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET
STRAND

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CHARACTERS

[MRS. GRAY *A housekeeper*
SNEE *A butler*
JINNY *A kitchen-maid*
GEORGE LINTON

SCENE.—*The library at 109 Belgrave Square.*

TIME.—*The present.*

BEFORE BREAKFAST

Produced at the Playhouse, May 2nd, 1912, with the following cast:—

<i>Mrs. Gray</i>		MISS E. VERNIE.
<i>Snee</i>		MR. JOHN HARWOOD.
<i>Jinny</i>		MISS VERA COBURN.
<i>George Linton</i>	. .	MR. LAURENCE ANDERSON.

BEFORE BREAKFAST

It is seven o'clock on a winter morning. The curtains are drawn across the windows, the ashes of yesterday's fire are in the grate; a tray with syphon of soda water, decanter of whisky, cigarettes, etc., on the table. The windows are at back with a bookcase between—fireplace L. doors up L. and down R. Big table centre with an armchair L. of it. Writing table with a telephone R.

(JINNY comes in down R. carrying a housemaid's box. She is narrow chested and undersized with an expression of face rather like that of a baby monkey. She is dressed in a print frock, white apron and cap. She turns on the electric light, puts her box on the hearthrug, shivers and yawns. The clock on the mantelpiece strikes eight very rapidly. She sings tunelessly under her breath, "Sing me to sleep, the shadows fall," spreads her dust-sheet, puts on enormous housemaid's gloves and a brown apron too long for her, and begins taking the ashes out of the grate. MRS. GRAY comes in door L. JINNY stops humming with a jerk and begins to work at a great pace. MRS. GRAY is about 50, with a good-looking respectable face and a neatly-fitting black dress buttoned down the front. She is in a very bad temper.)

MRS. GRAY (*without looking at JINNY*). Have you lighted Cook's fire?

JINNY. Yes, Mrs. Gray.

MRS. GRAY. And taken up her tea ?

JINNY. Yes, Mrs. Gray.

MRS. GRAY. And swept the dining-room ?

JINNY. No, Mrs. Gray. (*Jumps up to go and do it.*)

MRS. GRAY. Go on with your work.

(*JINNY thumps on to her knees again.*)

Just like you, flying off to one thing before you've finished another.

(*SNEE comes in L. a newspaper in his hand. He is slow and lugubrious.*)

SNEE. What's Jinny doing up here ?

MRS. GRAY (*sharply*). The fire. Susan's got influenza.

SNEE (*drearily*). Susan ?

MRS. GRAY (*shortly*). Yes. A hundred and four.

SNEE (*coming down*). It'll be Chawles next—I don't know what the under-servants are coming to. We never 'ad temperatoors. (*Takes his coat off, folds it and lays it over the back of the armchair L. of table.*)

MRS. GRAY. Over-eating. That's what it was called in our day. Now it's gastric chill if one has it, and influenza if it runs through the house.

JINNY. That must be what father 'as on Mondays.

MRS. GRAY. Hold your tongue.

SNEE (*in armchair*). What makes you so short this morning ?

MRS. GRAY. Mr. George. He ought to be ashamed of himself—him and his goings on.

SNEE (*turning his paper*). To hear you talk one would think 'e'd married the young woman.

MRS. GRAY. Where's Mr. George now ?

SNEE. In his bed, I suppose.

MRS. GRAY. That's as much as you know . . .

JINNY (*starting up*). Lor, if I ain't forgot to take up his 'ot water!

MRS. GRAY. Go on with your work! How often have I told you not to listen to the conversation.

(JINNY *thumps on to her knees again.*)

Last night they had a quarrel, and Mr. George left the house banging the front door fit to break it in pieces.

SNEE (*unimpressed*). I've known Mr. George 'ave nothing but soup and a bit o' fish before 'e up and left the table.

MRS. GRAY. Yes, but he hasn't come back.

SNEE (*raising his voice*). And I shouldn't wonder if 'e never does come back. It's my opinion Mr. George's no more in love than I am. But there's the master a-standing on the 'earthrug a-telling him about the family honour, and 'er ladyship a-talking fit to weary a saint—it's only a-drivin' 'im to marry her.

MRS. GRAY. It all comes of young gentlemen taking up with these new-fangled ideas—Socialism or whatever they call it.

SNEE. No, Mrs. Gray—there you're wrong. They gets sweet on the young woman first—arterwards the Socialism takes 'em. (*He resumes his paper.*)

MRS. GRAY (*turning away*). Oh, you're too sharp for me.

SNEE (*staring at paper*). Well, I'm blowed!

MRS. GRAY. What is it?

SNEE. Well, of all the —— blest if they haven't put it in the papers!

(GEORGE LINTON *has come in unperceived and stands listening. He looks very young. He is in evening-dress with an overcoat and he is wearing his hat. He is very pale and has a whimsically battered look.*)

MRS. GRAY. Not about Mr. George!

SNEE. Just you listen here. "The Stage and the Upper Circle"—that's their joke.

MRS. GRAY. Joke! Go on!

SNEE. All right, all right. (*Reading.*) "A proz of the recent romantic marriage of Lord Sutcliffe with Miss Gertie St. Clair which was brought to a happy conclusion in the Divorce Court yesterday—we have reason to believe that another highly interesting alliance will shortly take place between a charming young recruit to the Variety Stage and the only son of a well-known baronet"—That's him!—"The date of the wedding is not yet fixed, but Thursday being early closing in Clapham—"

(JINNY, who has risen with the poker and tongs in either hand, looks round at the familiar words.)

it is probable that the ceremony will take place on that day. It is said that the noble youth first saw his future bride when she was playing the Carrot in the Great Vegetable Act at the Holiday Empire."

JINNY (*faintly*). Cissy! Oh Lor!

(*She drops the fire-irons with a clatter.*)

MRS. GRAY (*startled by the noise*). Oh!

SNEE (*turning to JINNY*). Now then, now then—what are you a-doin' of?

JINNY (*breathless*). I'm very sorry, they kinder slipped out of my 'ands—(*Putting her hand to her chest.*) Oh lor—you did give me a turn.

SNEE. And who are you to have a turn?

MRS. GRAY. What's the matter with the girl? Are you crazy? (*Sees GEORGE LINTON.*)

GEORGE (*quietly at back*). What's she done? Broken something?

MRS. GRAY (*flurried*). It's nothing to matter, sir. The kitchenmaid, sir—there's influenza in the house. I was just saying—

GEORGE (*looking at JINNY*). I heard what you were saying. You may go.

(*Exit MRS. GRAY.*)

Don't put your coat on, Snee.

SNEE. Very good, sir.

GEORGE. I don't remember to have seen you in your shirt sleeves before. The house looks different, too. I've often wondered what it looked like before breakfast with you servants behaving yourselves just like real human beings—even you, Snee—and disappearing at the first sound of the breakfast gong like ghosts at cockcrow. I am not drunk, Snee.

SNEE. Very good, sir. (*He tries to pick up the paper without GEORGE seeing.*)

GEORGE (*without turning*). What's the paper you're trying to sneak off with?

SNEE (*embarrassed*). Society Tips, sir, if you would care to—

GEORGE. Put it down. By the way, is the telephone working?

SNEE. Yes, sir. (*Pause, unexpectedly.*) If you should decide to shoot lions in the African Jungle, sir—

GEORGE (*looking up*). What do you know about lions in the African Jungle?

SNEE. Excuse me, sir—I could hardly help overhearing Sir George suggesting it last night.

GEORGE. I see (*Turning on him.*) I'll let you know later!

SNEE (*mildly*). Very good, sir. (*To JINNY.*) 'Urry up!

(*Exit R.*)

(*GEORGE sits moodily thinking. Presently gets up and strolls across to R. and back again, his hands in his pockets and his eyes on the floor. As they encounter JINNY'S feet he stops and looks down on her as she polishes the bars.*)

GEORGE. So you all know.

(Hearing no reply, JINNY gradually realizes she has been spoken to—turns slowly.)

JINNY *(scared and guilty)*. Beg pardon, sir—did you speak to me?

GEORGE. I did. *(Meets her eyes and changes his mind)*. What's your name?

JINNY. Jinny, sir. At least that's what they call me 'ere.

GEORGE. What they call you! What is your real name—the one the angels know you by?

JINNY. Eustasia, sir.

GEORGE. Oh well, hang it all.

JINNY *(same tone)*. Yes, sir.

(Released, she goes back to her work, banging the bars of the grate.)

GEORGE *(getting the sound on his nerves)*. Need you do that?

JINNY *(wonderingly)*. Yes, sir.

GEORGE. Why need you? Do you like doing it?

JINNY. Not partic'lar, sir—I never think about it.

GEORGE. Never think—it's the crying sin of your class. Why don't you break away?

JINNY *(staring)*. Brike away?

GEORGE. Yes! Why should you light our beastly fires because we want to warm ourselves?

JINNY. Lor', sir, I'd get the boot if I didn't. *(Suddenly remembering herself.)* Beg pardon, sir—I didn't mean to—

GEORGE. Nonsense—beg pardon. I'm a Socialist—and no Socialist ever apologizes to any one for anything. . . . Do you know what Socialism means?

JINNY *(in the same frightened tone)*. What they talks about in 'Ide Park of a Sunday?

GEORGE. No, no,—not that. It means . . .

(JINNY listens, her stick in her hand.)

Well, just at the moment it means that it is quite wrong that you should be afraid to say what you think to me. That you and I are not really master and servant—but simply two human beings alive on the earth together. -

JINNY (*simply and seriously*). Lor! (*Grins broadly and familiarly*.) You're not kidding?

GEORGE. Kidding—certainly not. So you may as well tell me why you were talking about me just now.

JINNY (*guilty again*). It wasn't me, sir.

GEORGE. It's that confounded paragraph I suppose.

JINNY. It was before that, sir.

GEORGE. Before? How's that?

JINNY (*relapsing*). I dunno, sir. Please can I go on with the fire?

GEORGE. I'm beginning to wonder if there's anything you servants don't know about us.

JINNY (*unexpectedly*). Not much.

GEORGE. What do you mean by that?

JINNY (*relapsing*). I dunno, sir.

GEORGE. Jinny, you're the most unconvivial person I ever met—or else you're hiding something. What is it?

JINNY. I dunno, sir.

GEORGE (*smiling*). Did you write the paragraph?

JINNY (*earnestly*). No, sir—it wasn't me, sir.

GEORGE. Jinny, you interest me—I'm glad I spoke to you . . . who wrote it if you didn't?

JINNY. 'E didn't exactly write it—not with 'is own 'and Charles didn't.

GEORGE. Charles, was it!

JINNY. No, sir. It was a noospaper gentleman as called.

GEORGE. Well—I'm——

JINNY. Said as 'ow 'e was collectin' bits of noos,

sir. Just a-goin' round lookin' in friendly-like at the big 'ouses and gettin' it first 'and as you might say.

GEORGE. From footmen and kitchen maids. (*Letting fly.*) Damn his impudence.

JINNY (*dejected*). I dessay as Chawles thought as 'ow you'd be pleased at getting into the papers. (*Coming down with dustpan and brush.*) I don't 'ardly like to do it with you there, sir.

GEORGE. Do what.

JINNY. Take up the bits.

GEORGE. Oh, I don't mind. Don't take me up, that's all.

(JINNY *drops on to her knees and brushes. He watches her for a moment.*)

You ever in love, Jinny?

JINNY. Lord bless yer, yes. Reg'lar took with it, I was.

GEORGE. What's your story?

JINNY (*mystified*). Story, sir? . . . I ain't got no story.

GEORGE. Of course you have—everybody has who's been in love.

JINNY (*slowly*). There was 'ERB . . . though 'e weren't rightly what you'd call a story.

GEORGE (*glancing at the telephone*). What was he then?

JINNY. 'E was a pig-jobber, sir. 'E died, 'Erb did.

GEORGE. Died! Poor Jinny.

JINNY (*resuming her brushing slowly*). Yes, sir, not—wot—you'd call a story. 'E warn't no great shakes to look at, what with the consumption and all—but me bein' such a bit of a thing I didn't take no notice o' that. And what with 'im wastin' and a-worritin' to get married . . . it wasn't what you'd call a story.

GEORGE. And you wouldn't?

JINNY (*shaking her head shrewdly*). Marry 'im ? No, sir.

GEORGE. Why didn't you take your chance and live it out—one crowded hour of glorious life ?

JINNY (*taking the stuff off her brush*). Lor', sir, 'e used to talk just like you. "All for love and the world well lost!" 'e says to me, a-comin' down the Clapham Road one Saturday night. But 'e 'adn't nothing to lose—not even 'is job.

GEORGE (*sarcastically*). I suppose you think you loved him ?

JINNY. Pretty nearly dragged the life out of me when 'e died. Gawd—loved 'im !

GEORGE. Not you !

JINNY (*sharply*). What d'yer mean, not me ?

GEORGE. You'd have married him if you had.

JINNY (*passionately*). Just you leave me and 'Erb alone, see ?

GEORGE (*pulled up*). Jinny.

JINNY. What do you know abart love, you and your Cissy ? Leave us two alone, leave us alone. (*Her voice drops. She continues to look at him for a moment longer, then slowly drops her brush and dustpan, covers her face with her arms and begins to cry.*)

GEORGE. Cissy ! (*Sharply*.) What do you know about Cissy ?

JINNY (*incoherently*). I never told a soul—I never knew myself till Mrs. Gray said the name—that was what give me such a turn, to think it was our Cissy you was sweet on.

GEORGE. Our Cissy ? . . .

JINNY (*gulping*). That's what father calls her.

GEORGE (*sharply*). Father ! . . . I don't understand. Who is Cissy's . . . I mean, *your* father ?

JINNY. 'E's a greengrocer—in the Clapham Road.

GEORGE. Clapham ! Early closing ! . . . It's a lie. (*Violently*.) Your father was a curate in a picturesque parish in Kent and he died when you were all children !

JINNY. Father a curate! Just you ask mother. (*Speaking through.*) Bless your innocence, fancy 'er a-codding you like that—Oh lor, to think of Cissy sitting among the daisies with the church bells a-ringing—

GEORGE (*same tone*). You were her only sister—you married a rich man and went out to America. Would she have gone on the halls if she hadn't been left without a penny? Doesn't she hate and loathe it? (*Change.*) You her sister! Her hair, her eyes—why, she's prettiness itself—

JINNY. Pretty enough to catch a gentleman! that's 'er little game, and she's done it too.

GEORGE (*sharply*). Don't be impertinent. You forget yourself.

JINNY (*relapsing into servitude*). I—beg pardon, sir. . . . I oughtn't to have spoke so. . . . It's along o' you speakin' to me so nat'ral.

GEORGE. No, no—I didn't mean that—but . . . Jinny—you don't know how serious this is to me. (*Quietly.*) Is Cissy your sister?

JINNY. Yes, sir. (*Pause.*)

GEORGE (*same tone*). Thanks, I only wanted to be sure. (*Gazing at her as she kneels staring up at him, her brush in her hand and her cap awry.*) Of—course—it makes no difference. . . . She's so pretty. And yet . . . there's something, now that I come to look at you—a dreadful kind of likeness—(*Turning away*). Clapham—early closing—

JINNY. Don't take it so 'ard, sir. We ain't your clarss, but we'll always be proud to think you've come into the family.

GEORGE (*in a broken voice—his back turned*). Thanks. . . .

JINNY (*making dabs at a "bit" here and there*). It's kind o' cheerful at 'ome—there's more life in mother than what there is in 'er ladyship. If only business'd go better—

GEORGE (*same tone*). Perhaps it will.

JINNY. But what with the Stores a-settin' up in the 'Igh Street and the wet summer gettin' into the cabbages—But don't you worry, sir. You've no call to know us if that's what it is. Cissy don't come 'ome now she's a lidy.

GEORGE. Lidy! (*Walking up and down.*) What the dickens am I going to do?

JINNY. Do?

GEORGE. Yes, do! Do, do, do! . . . I've been had! Like any little fool from Eton.

JINNY (*sympathetically*). She'd have any one, our Cissy would—There's Mr. Jones at the corner—

GEORGE (*sharply*). Jones? There's Jones, is there? And Smith? And Robinson?

JINNY. Lor, sir—there ain't no 'arm in a girl 'avin' a bit o' fun. Might 'ave 'ad a bit myself if it 'adn't a-been for my fice—and 'Erb.

GEORGE. What am I going to do?

JINNY (*briskly*). Sit tight and think it over.

GEORGE. *Think*? There isn't time. She's going to ring me up—

JINNY. Ring you up? On that there telephone?

GEORGE. Good Lord, what else should she ring me up on?

JINNY. What for?

GEORGE. Because she's got tired of hanging on—wants to get married. . . .

(*Telephone bell rings.*)

Good heavens—there it is. Here Jinny—answer for me. Say I'm out, say I'm dead—say anything!

JINNY. Me, sir?

(*Bell rings on.*)

GEORGE. Don't be a little fool. Answer it, I tell you. (*Takes her by the shoulders, runs her up to the telephone and puts the receiver to her ear.*) Now, fire away!

JINNY. What am I to say?

GEORGE (*in a whisper, retreating to the fireplace*). Say "Are you there?" or "Hullo!" or something—

JINNY. Are you there—'Ulloh! 'Ulloh! (*Dropping the receiver.*) 'Ow!

GEORGE. Go on, go on—it won't hurt you.

JINNY. There's some one inside.

GEORGE (*forcing the receiver to her ear*). Go on I tell you—"Mr. George Linton has gone out."

JINNY. Mr. GEORGE LINTON says 'e's gone out—what? (*Change to her natural tones*). Yes, it's me and no error. . . . Jinny, Jinny—swallow and get it over. . . . I'm in a place 'ere. It's no use arguing about it—it'll only spoil the telephone. . . . Your language is disgustin' . . . (*Raising her voice.*) I tell you 'e's out—I tell you—what? (*Loudly.*) Liar, yourself. Who borrowed money o' mother and never paid 'er back? Who walked out with the sweep? What? Boil your own 'ead—and boil it 'ard. Played the Carrot did you? and a very good colour too till you dyed yer 'air. You little toad, you mongrel, you gutter-bird, you narsty, dirty, sneaking, sly, under'and—Oh—if Mr. George wasn't in the room wouldn't I let you 'ave it! You and your curate for a father—and Dad never been inside a church since 'e was christened. And I'm married to a millionaire, am I? and left you to starve, did I? and me that's gone without my dinner to get you your frocks to make a show with! (*Gathering up for a last shot.*) But just you listen to me! 'E knows all about you—Mr. George does—you've got to catch him honest, see? and no 'umbug. And if you try and cod 'im any more, I'll tell 'im about—

GEORGE (*crossing*). Stop, stop—for Heaven's sake—(*Snatches the receiver from JINNY and puts it up—crosses back with his hands to his head.*) Oh, lord, what a mess! What a hideous sordid mess—

JINNY (*rushes back to the telephone and snatches receiver—shouting*). Kitchen-maid yourself. And don't you talk to me about liars—(*Change.*) What

d'yer say? My number? I ain't got no number—I was only passing a few remarks with my sister. (*Rings off hastily.*) Took me for a keb!

GEORGE (*starting up*). By Gad, this is the end of it. Where's my hat? My coat? (*Calling.*) Snee, Snee! Oh, ring the bell—

(SNEE comes in R.)

JINNY (*facing L.*) Me ring the bell for Mr. Snee?

GEORGE. Why the devil not?

JINNY. You'll say it was you when he comes? (*Rings.*)

SNEE. You called me, sir?

GEORGE. Get me a taxi at once.

SNEE. Yes, sir. Sir George wishes to see you immediately after breakfast.

GEORGE (*wildly*). What, more of it. . . . Get me a taxi—four wheeler—anything!

(*Exit SNEE—a cab whistle is heard off, and the sound of a taxi.*)

Look here—(*Plunging into his coat.*) I'm not likely ever to be down again at nine, so I don't suppose we shall meet again in this world—(*Breaks off, feels in his pockets*) take this to remind you of the time when we both forgot our place—all right, all right.

JINNY. You ain't going away, sir? Not for always?

SNEE. Taxi's here, sir.

(GEORGE rushes to the door.)

SNEE. And what address shall I tell Sir George, sir?

GEORGE (*at the door*). Tell him—the Jungle!

(EXEUNT.)

(*Toot of a horn—sound of a taxi driving off.* JINNY stands stupefied gazing at the sovereign in her hand.)

JINNY (*looking up as the front door bangs*). A sov'ring! And all for doing nothing!

(*The breakfast gong is heard swelling to a deafening clang. JINNY starts—puts the sovereign in her pocket—picks up her dustpan and brush—and scuttles off R. Clear stage and—*)

CURTAIN.

SWEET WILL

A COMEDY

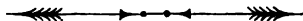
IN ONE ACT

BY

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

AUTHOR OF

"THE MIDDLEMAN," "WEALTH," "SAINTS AND SINNERS," ETC.



NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
PUBLISHER
24 WEST 22D STREET

LONDON
SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD.
PUBLISHERS
26 Southampton St., Strand

*First performed at the NEW CLUB, COVENT GARDEN, before
H. R. H. the PRINCE OF WALES, on Saturday,
March 5, 1887*

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

Mrs. Darbyshire (*Will's mother*)..... Miss LE THIÈRE
Mary Darbyshire (*Will's sister*)..... Miss ANNIE HUGHES
Judith Loveless..... Miss KATE RORKE
Betty (*Will's old nurse*)..... Miss LAVIS
Will Darbyshire..... Mr. E. W. GARDINER

TIME—*A Winter's Evening.*

SCENE—*The Oak Parlour at Fenny Chase.*

SWEET WILL.

SCENE.—*The oak parlour at Fenny Chase, a cosy room in an old English manor house; the walls panelled in oak; old-fashioned well-worn furniture and drapery; doors R. and L. fireplace down L. bright fire burning; large bow window at back with curtains drawn across; lamp on table; everything bright and cosy for a winter's evening.*

Enter, door R., BETTY, showing in JUDITH LOVELESS, in out-door dress, flecked with snow.

BETTY. If you'll take a seat by the fire, Miss Judy, I'll tell Mrs. Darbyshire you're here.

JUDY (*shivering*). Whew! What a bitter night!

BETTY. Yes, I've been thinking what a cold journey Master Will 'll have down from London, won't he, miss?

JUDY (*interested*). He is coming back to-night?

(*Crosses to fireplace, warms herself.*)

BETTY. This very night. We expect him every minute, bless his dear soul! And such a cold as he had when he started!

JUDY. I don't think Mr. Darbyshire takes enough care of himself.

BETTY. Not he. But you leave him to me, Miss Judy. I've got a big blazing fire lighted in his bedroom, and three extra blankets on his bed, and a big dose of rum and honey for him to take the last thing!

JUDY. You are a dear, good, faithful creature, Betty, and—and—(*awkwardly taking out her purse*)—and—I should like to make you a little present (*offering money*).

BETTY. Oh, no, Miss Judy, I couldn't think of being paid for taking care of my boy.

JUDY (*confused*). Oh—this—this is quite on my own account—a little Christmas box.

BETTY. Why it wants three weeks to Christmas, Miss Judy!

JUDY. Yes, but I may forget it. (*Impatiently.*) Do take it, Betty. Don't be foolish.

BETTY (*taking it*). Bless your dear eyes, Miss Judy! Ah! Master Will 'll have somebody better than his old nurse to take care of him one of these days, I'll be bound!

JUDY. What do you mean, Betty?

(*Confused, hiding her face from BETTY.*)

BETTY (*grinning and chuckling*). Why all of us can see where his heart is!

JUDY (*very pleased, still hiding her face from BETTY; very softly*). And where do you suppose it is, Betty?

BETTY (*nodding her head, with a knowing grin*). Why, Miss Judy, your own heart has told you that, long ago.

JUDY. How dare you! (*Angrily crossing the room.*) Tell Mrs. Darbyshire I wish to see her, if she is disengaged.

BETTY. Yes, Miss Judy. I hope you are not offended.

JUDY. I am—very much offended. Never dare to take such liberties again!

BETTY. No, miss. Only the other morning, after you had left, I saw Master Will——

JUDY. Well?

BETTY. But, I forgot, miss. I'll tell Mrs. Darbyshire you are waiting. (*Going.*)

JUDY (*calling her back*). Betty! (*Exit BETTY, L. JUDY rushing to door L. calling off*) Betty!

Re-enter BETTY.

BETTY. Yes, miss.

JUDY. I didn't mean to be angry with you just now.

BETTY (*grinning and chuckling*). Law, bless your dear heart, Miss Judy, I could see that!

JUDY (*flaming up*). Then I am very angry indeed with you!

BETTY. Yes, miss. (*Going.*)

JUDY (*calling her back*). Betty!

BETTY. Yes, miss. (*Coming back.*)

JUDY. But I'll forgive you this once, if you won't say such things again.

BETTY. No, miss. (*Going.*)

JUDY. And Betty, you know that tartan shawl of mine.

BETTY. What, the beautiful blue and green and yellow?

JUDY. Yes, it's of no further use to me. You can come to the rectory to-morrow morning and fetch it.

BETTY. Oh, no, Miss Judy, I couldn't think——

JUDY. Yes, I insist.

BETTY (*curtseying*). Oh, thank you, Miss Judy. (*Going.*)

JUDY (*calling her*). Betty!

BETTY. Yes, miss.

JUDY. You were saying the other morning after I had left——

BETTY. Yes, miss.

JUDY (*confused*). You were saying that he—Mr. Darbyshire—I mean—I suppose after I had left——

BETTY. Well, miss, it's no business of mine, but you remember dropping your glove?

JUDY. I did lose a glove. Did I leave it here?

BETTY. Yes, miss, and when I came in two minutes afterwards, there was Master Will a-kissing it as if he'd eat it. And that's as true as I'm standing here, Miss Judy.

JUDY (*secretly pleased*). How absurd of him! Tell Mrs. Darbyshire I wish to see her.

BETTY. Yes, miss. (*Exit door L.*)

JUDY. They all say he cares for me! Everybody notices it! And yet he never says a word! Oh, it is cruel of him!

Enter door L. MRS. DARBYSHIRE, a very stately, silver-haired old lady.

MRS. D. My dear child, what brings you out this bitter night? (*Kissing her tenderly.*)

JUDY. Oh, the most important business in the world. I had two letters by this evening's post—now guess what one of them contains!

MRS. D. How can I, unless I see inside?

JUDY. And I rushed over here to ask your advice.

MRS. D. My advice?

JUDY. Yes, where should I go for advice now my own mother's dead, except to my dear old godmother?

MRS. D. Well, come and tell me all about it.

MRS. DARBYSHIRE *sits in armchair near fire*; JUDY *throws off her hat and cloak, and sits on footstool at MRS. DARBYSHIRE'S feet.*

JUDY (*taking out letters*). There's one of them. It's an offer of marriage!

MRS. D. An offer of marriage! Not from Will?

JUDY (*much confused*). From Will—from Mr. Darbyshire—oh dear no (*laughing off her confusion*). What put such an idea into your head?

MRS. D. My dear, I couldn't think for the moment who else there could be.

JUDY. Oh, there are one or two other men in the world.

MRS. D. Not for me; not for his mother!

(*Putting on her spectacles.*)

JUDY (*aside, with a sigh*). Nor for me!

MRS. D. But it was very stupid of me. Of course Will need not *write* to you when he is seeing you almost every day.

JUDY. No, he need not *write* to me, or indeed *speak*, at least on *that* subject. It would be quite hopeless for him either way.

MRS. D. (*looking at JUDY gravely over her spectacles*). I am sorry to hear you say so, Judy.

JUDY (*irritated*). Well, never mind him! Read this letter.

MRS. D. (*having glanced at letter*). From Mr. Samuel Gathercole, your father's former curate.

JUDY. Yes, he was always fond of me. And now he's got a hundred and fifty a year, instead of a hundred and twenty, and he speaks out.

MRS. D. Yes, my dear, curates are inclined to do that on even less than a hundred and fifty a year.

JUDY (*impatiently*). Well, am I to say "Yes" or "No"?

MRS. D. What does your own heart say?

JUDY. Oh, my heart tells fibs. I never listen to it.

MRS. D. It's a very small income to marry on.

JUDY. Perhaps he'll get a "living."

MRS. D. He'll be luckier than many poor curates if he does.

JUDY. And he might be made a bishop some day.

MRS. D. I don't wish to influence you, but Mr. Gathercole is hardly the man I should have chosen for you. To begin with, he has a red beard—carrotty, I might say.

JUDY. Oh, but there's quite a rich brownish tinge on it if you catch it in a certain light.

MRS. D. I never saw it in that light.

JUDY. And I daresay he'd shave it off to please me.

MRS. D. Well, my dear, you know best, and if you have made up your mind to have him——

JUDY. I haven't made up my mind to have him, and as you don't like him, I'll write and say "No," and there's an end of the matter.

MRS. D. (*kissing her*). My dear Judy, you have made me so happy.

JUDY. Why, godmamma?

MRS. D. I must not tell you, I cannot tell you——

JUDY. Yes, yes, you must, I insist——

MRS. D. No, I cannot. It's only an old woman's fancy, and I might make you very unhappy.

JUDY (*impetuously*). You cannot make me more unhappy than I am. (*Rising.*)

MRS. D. (*rising*). Judy! (*Surprised.*)

JUDY (*hurriedly*). No, no, I don't mean that—only I have just got such a stupid, impertinent letter from my cousin—or rather mamma's cousin, Mr. Boggett.

MRS. D. Boggett? That's the man who was staying with you at the rectory last summer. He came from America, did he not?

JUDY. Yes, he has some flour mills at Chicago, and papa believes he's very rich and says I ought to keep on good terms with him.

MRS. D. He seemed a good-natured, well-meaning man, but decidedly coarse, emphatically not a gentleman.

JUDY. Oh, I believe he's a dear old fellow at heart. He wanted to marry mamma, you know, but as they were first cousins, grandfather objected. And so he never married. I suppose it was his love for mamma that made him so fond of me. And he took a great fancy to Mr. Darbyshire.

MRS. D. (*very proudly*). Everybody takes a fancy to my Will. The Duchess of Clifton used to make a point of kissing him in his perambulator.

JUDY. I've always understood she was a woman of very good taste.

MRS. D. Excellent taste, my dear. And the old Marquis of Naseby—a very wicked old man—bought him a humming-top in the Burlington Arcade. I don't say it because I'm his mother, but it is impossible to know my Will without loving him.

JUDY. Mr. Darbyshire took my cousin up to London and showed him all the places of interest, and Mr. Boggett was delighted.

MRS. D. Naturally he would be with an acquaintance like my son. I fear Will is a little too fond of making friendships in the lower and middle classes. The other day I actually caught him playing leapfrog with the common village boys. He ought to remember that he is the great-grandson of the thirteenth Earl of Grandborough!

JUDY. I don't think he ever troubles himself about that.

MRS. D. No, but he ought. I know that I am reduced in the world, but I never forget that I am the granddaughter of an Earl. Unfortunately, as you know, my dear, I married a poor country squire, who made ducks and drakes of his estate, and now here we are with a bare pittance, just enough to live upon and that's all. Will ought to be more ambitious—my cousin, Lord Grandborough, is Colonial Secretary, and he ought to see Will's talents, and do something for him.

JUDY (*proudly*). Mr. Darbyshire is too proud to beg a favour of any man.

MRS. D. Grandborough ought to do it without asking. What's the use of having a seat in the Cabinet unless you can provide for your poor relations? Now where's this dreadful letter from Mr. Boggett?

JUDY. Here it is.

MRS. D. He has not presumed to propose to you?

JUDY. Worse than that! But before you read it you must give me your promise never to mention a word of it to anybody.

MRS. D. Certainly not, my dear, if you don't wish it.

JUDY. Not for the world! I wouldn't show it to *you*, only Mr. Boggett has enclosed a letter for your son, and I don't know what to do with it.

MRS. D. Give it to him.

JUDY. I daren't.

MRS. D. Why not?

JUDY. Read Mr. Boggett's letter to me, and then you will see.

MRS. D. (*coming to lamp and reading*). "My dear Judith, I suppose by this time you and Mr. Darbyshire have made up your minds upon the all-important question of matrimony. You will excuse my plainness——"

JUDY. I won't excuse it!

MRS. D. "But everybody could see that it was a match between the Chase and the Rectory——"

JUDY. Isn't it shameful?

MRS. D. "So don't beat about the bush——"

JUDY. I should like to beat him!

MRS. D. "But get the little affair settled as soon as you can, and come over to Chicago and spend your honeymoon with your affectionate cousin, Peter Boggett. P.S.—I enclose a letter for Will, which please hand to him the first time you see him." Well, I am astounded! It is positively indelicate!

JUDY. It's downright impertinence! I'll never forgive Mr. Boggett (*pacing up and down the room*). Now, Mrs. Darbyshire, haven't I done everything in my power to show how perfectly indifferent I am toward your son?

MRS. D. My dear child, I am so sorry you should be exposed to this.

JUDY. It's quite a trap for me. I am certain if we could see inside that letter we should find Mr. Boggett has said just the same thing to Mr. Darbyshire; and how can I give it to him?

MRS. D. It is very awkward. Shall I give it to Will?

JUDY. That would be quite as bad. He would know it came through me, and he would think I wanted to marry him, and then—(*holding down her head*)—I should die for shame.

MRS. D. (*taking her hands very tenderly*). My dear Judy, if I ask you a question will you be frank with me?

JUDY. It all depends what the question is.

MRS. D. If Will were to ask you to be his wife, what would you say?

JUDY (*resolutely*). I should say "No."

MRS. D. Really and truly?

JUDY. Most decidedly, I should.

MRS. D. And you would stick to it?

JUDY. Yes—unless he pressed me very much.

MRS. D. And then——

JUDY. Then I should say—I would think the matter over.

MRS. D. (*tenderly stroking Judy's hair*). Ah, my dear, you can't think how I have built upon your being my Will's wife.

JUDY (*hugging her*). Oh!

MRS. D. And I do believe Will is fond of you.

JUDY. But so many girls are setting their caps at him. The abominable way in which Fanny Robinson intrigued to sit next to him at Mr. Pottinger's the other evening! I hate those Robinson girls!

MRS. D. I feel sure he cares for you.

JUDY. Has he ever said so?

MRS. D. Not in so many words. Will is the best of sons, but he does not give me all his confidence. Mary is his confidante. Now I cannot understand all these mysterious journeys to London. What business has he in London?

JUDY. Does he never tell you?

MRS. D. Not a word; and he comes back worried and careworn as if he had some terrible secret.

JUDY. He returns to-night?

MRS. D. Yes, and I shall have a long talk with him. He is thirty-two, and it is time he was married and settled. I shall tell him I wish it.

JUDY (*quickly*). You will not say a word about me?

MRS. D. I shall see. I shall certainly tell him you have had an offer from Mr. Gathercole.

JUDY. Yes, you might mention that.

MRS. D. (*suddenly*). My dear Judy, a capital thought has just struck me! We'll make him jealous! You shall tell him you are going to accept Mr. Gathercole's offer!

JUDY. Oh, but I am not, you know.

MRS. D. Never mind, if he thinks somebody else is going to marry you, it will make him speak out.

JUDY. Perhaps it will. And I will keep this letter from cousin Peter until we see whether he does speak out. It can't be very important, I should think (*looking at letter*). I wonder what it says?

MRS. D. (*ringing bell*). Now come upstairs. I want to show you the new dressing-gown he gave me on my birthday. And we can have a talk, and settle our plans.

Enter BETTY, door L. JUDY puts letter in her pocket.

MRS. D. Mr. Will has not come, Betty?

BETTY. No, ma'am.

MRS. D. Let me know when he arrives.

BETTY. Yes, ma'am. (*Exeunt MRS. DARBYSHIRE and JUDY, door, L. BETTY draws aside the window curtains, discovers garden trees covered with snow, and snow falling heavily: looking off R.*) Bless me, here's a night! Hark! There's somebody coming! That's his step! It's Master Will! It's my boy! That it is, bless his dear soul! (*Going to door R. she meets WILL DARBYSHIRE, who enters, covered with snow; effusively.*) Oh, Master Will, here you be! You're come back! Oh, my precious boy! There! Let me help you off with your coat. (*Helping him off with his coat.*) Oh what a night!

Well to be sure! How glad I am to see you, bless your dear heart!

WILL. Hush! That's enough, Betty! Where's my sister?

BETTY. Upstairs in her room.

WILL. Tell her I wish to see her at once.

BETTY. Yes, that I will, and your mother, too.

(Going off left.)

WILL. No, not my mother. She must not know I am here until I have seen my sister.

BETTY. Law, Master Will, and she's been a-worrying about you as never was; and Miss Judy's here, too, and she's longing to set eyes upon you, I'll be bound, bless her dear soul!

WILL *(sternly)*. Do as I tell you, Betty. Send Miss Mary to me at once.

BETTY. Yes, Master Will. *(Aside.)* What's the matter now, I should like to know. *(Exit L.)*

WILL. Judy here! Then I must face her before I go! I thought to have spared myself that! God give me strength for this night's task! However I am tempted, not a word of love shall pass my lips. For her sake I must be silent!

Enter L. MARY DARBYSHIRE.

MARY. Will! } *(They embrace heartily.)*
WILL. Mary! }

MARY. I am so glad you are home again, dear. Let me call mother. And Judy is here.

WILL *(arresting her)*. No! Stay! I have something to tell you.

MARY. To tell me?

WILL. Yes, and I must be quick. My time is short. Sit here. *(He places chair for her, then goes to each door and looks outside to see nobody is listening; during his narration he sometimes stands over her and sometimes walks up and down; taking her hands.)* Mary, you are a brave girl——

MARY. Oh, Will, you frighten me! What has happened?

WILL. Nothing to alarm you—something that perhaps will be a little hard to bear. Come now! Summon all your courage. I must tell you, and I have but a few minutes. Be brave, for my sake, for our mother's sake.

MARY. Oh, Will, what is it? Tell me. I can bear it. See, I am quite firm.

WILL. Well, briefly, the old Chase is mortgaged up to the hilt! And I am a beggar, and worse than a beggar!

MARY. Oh, Will, why did you not tell us so before?

WILL. I thought I should right myself, but the seasons have been dead against me, and year after year I have been getting deeper and deeper into the mire, and now I can stave it off no longer.

MARY. But how did the Chase become mortgaged? At

father's death the estates were sold and the mortgages paid off, and we were given to understand the Chase and the two home farms were quite clear.

WILL. Quite true, I thought so. But I found my father had left other claims——

MARY. Other claims? Gambling debts?

WILL. Worse than that.

MARY. I don't understand.

WILL. It isn't fit you should. I cannot mention them to you, only to say that I was bound to meet them at any cost to preserve my mother from insult. That was the threat held over my head. What could I do? I was obliged to satisfy the harpies. Now ask no more.

MARY (*rising*). Oh, wicked father!

WILL. Oh, let him be! He's gone to his rest.

MARY. And left his sins for you to pay the penalty. Is it right?

WILL (*quietly*). It's inevitable, at any rate. When a man throws off every natural responsibility, as poor dad did, why the burden is safe to fall upon somebody's shoulders. And it has happened to fall on mine—that's all.

MARY (*embracing him*). Oh, Will, and all this while you have been wearing away your youth in this hopeless struggle, and you have never told us a word of it.

WILL (*cheerfully*). Oh, I am only thirty-two and the world is never lost to a man at that age, with health on his side. Now, summon a little more courage, because I have something else to tell you.

MARY. The Chase will have to be sold—we shall have to leave it.

WILL. No, as good luck would have it—we shall keep the Chase.

MARY. Of course, the money for my marriage settlement is gone, but that's no matter. Jack and I don't mind that a bit.

WILL. Oh, I have provided for that.

MARY. Oh, Will, I won't have it, indeed I won't.

WILL. But you must. I have always kept that money sacred, and I paid in to the lawyer's last week three thousand pounds—I wish it were more.

MARY. Then you shall take it back. (*Very vehemently*.) I will not touch it! Jack is poor, but not so poor as that. Take my word for it, Will, we will not touch a penny of it.

WILL. My dear girl, the matter's settled and the consols bought. But now you must bear to hear that I have to leave England for several years.

MARY. Oh no, Will, not that!

WILL. Yes, and this very night (*looking at watch*). I go by the mail.

MARY. You cannot mean it. It will break mother's heart.

WILL. She must not know it. She must think I am going for a few weeks or months at the outside, and then we must break it to her by degrees. Oh, Mary, take care of her when I'm gone—I may never see her again!

(Turning away his head.)

MARY. Oh no, Will, it is too cruel to her. You must not go.

WILL. Indeed I must. I lunched with Lord Grandborough yesterday, and he has offered me a post of fifteen hundred a year, in Saint Valentine's Island.

MARY. Saint Valentine's Island! But, Will, that's the island where all the Europeans die of fever?

WILL. Not all. I am young and strong. I must risk it.

MARY *(clinging to him)*. You shall not go.

WILL. I must. I have all but accepted it. I have to give Lord Grandborough my answer in London to-morrow morning, and start at once with despatches. The niggers have been rising again, and they expect some nasty work.

MARY. But I am sure mother would not wish it. Oh, Will, her heart is bound up in you! She would rather leave the Chase and live in a cottage.

WILL. What good would that do? And she would have to be told the wretched secret I have been keeping from her all these years. She is not used to poverty—she could not bear it. My mother, with all her pride and high notions—in a cottage—I can't fancy it! Besides, I want to keep the old Chase, and I will, every brick, every tree that's left to me. And this is the only way I can do it. I reckon I shall pay off the mortgage in fifteen years if I live.

MARY. But if you die—oh, Will, if you should die!

WILL *(very quietly and tenderly)*. That's not the worst thing that can happen to a man. Before I start I shall insure my life for a sufficient sum to keep my mother in comfort. But I shall not die. I mean to come back to Europe, say in fifteen years, and enjoy myself.

MARY. You will be nearly fifty.

WILL. Yes, quite an old fogey!

MARY. Oh, Will, I can't bear it!

WILL. You must. Remember you have to take care of our mother, and keep all this trouble from her. We must trump up some tale about Lord Grandborough having invited me to stay with him for a few weeks, and then when I have left England I can write and prepare her for the long separation.

MARY. You have quite made up your mind—nothing will change you?

WILL. Nothing, short of a miracle.

MARY. Then trust me—I will do all you wish.

WILL. That's my own brave sister!

MARY. And Judy—I thought you cared for her—

WILL. Too much to ask her to waste her life with mine. Not a word to her. Hark! They are coming. Come! Look bright and happy! I have but an hour to stay!

Enter L., MRS. DARBYSHIRE and JUDY.

MRS. D. My dear Will (*kissing him with great affection*). My dear boy!

WILL. Mother!

MRS. D. You truant, to run away from your poor old mother like this! I shall buy a chain and chain you to my side for the next six months, do you hear?

WILL (*with assumed carelessness*). Ah, Judy! How d'ye do?

JUDY (*very coldly*). Quite well, thank you.

(Goes up stage and looks out of window.)

MARY. Oh, I must have one good cry, and then I can bear it. *(Exit L.)*

MRS. D. Have you dined, Will?

WILL. Yes, I had an hour to wait at the junction.

MRS. D. Then come and sit by the fire and tell me all the news. And then I have got a very important piece of news to tell you. Judy, won't you come to the fire?

JUDY (*up at window*). Thank you; I like to watch the snow. *(Aside.)* He doesn't take a bit of notice of me.

(MRS. DARBYSHIRE and WILL sit at fire.)

MRS. D. (*stroking WILL's hair very fondly*). Now tell me, whom did you see in London? Did you call on the Marquis of Naseby?

WILL. No, mother. *(Aside.)* How shall I break it to her?

MRS. D. Ah, that was wrong, Will. You ought to keep up the acquaintance. The late Marquis was a particular friend of mine. He bought you a humming-top in the Burlington Arcade.

WILL (*with quiet humour*). Yes, and I fancy the present Marquis thinks the money was very badly laid out,—especially as the top wouldn't hum.

MRS. D. Never mind, it spun round very nicely. And I've got the top upstairs,—Judy, do you hear?—the humming-top that the Marquis of Naseby presented to Will,—I am keeping it as a present for Will's eldest son.

WILL. Don't reckon other people's chickens before they are hatched.

MRS. D. Well, did you see anybody else?

WILL. I saw Grandborough,—lunched with him.

MRS. D. Judy, do you hear? Will lunched with Lord Grandborough. *(To WILL.)* How's his gout?

WILL. Bad. He swore terribly at his man. *(Aside.)* I can't tell her.

MRS. D. But he received you kindly?

WILL. Oh, yes; in fact—he—he—he gave me a sort of invitation—

MRS. D. To Grandborough Court?

WILL. Well—no—not exactly to Grandborough Court.

MRS. D. Ah, to Saint James's Square. Judy, do you hear?—my cousin Grandborough has invited Will to stay with him. (*To WILL.*) Well, what else? Did Lady Grandborough ask after me?

WILL. Oh yes, very kindly. (*Aside.*) That's a fib, but it'll please her.

MRS. D. Did she express any wish to see me?

WILL. Well, only a general wish,—if you were up in town no doubt you'd call.

MRS. D. Ah, my dear, we're poor. We live in a shabby sort of way, and only keep two servants. That's the reason our company is not sought after. But do you know who Lady Grandborough's grandfather was?

WILL. I don't know him from Adam.

MRS. D. Judy, do you know?

JUDY. No. Isn't the snow pretty? (*Aside.*) He hasn't said a word to me.

MRS. D. Why he kept a small draper's shop in the Tottenham Court Road. I've heard all about her antecedents. But I'm glad Grandborough has recognized your talents. Well, what else?

WILL. Nothing else of consequence. (*Aside.*) Mary must break it to her—she'll only get asking a lot of questions and I should betray myself.

(MRS. DARBYSHIRE has gone up to window and brought JUDY down stage.)

MRS. D. Well, now Judy and I have got a piece of news for you.

WILL. Oh? What's that?

MRS. D. Judy's going to be married.

WILL (*hurt, startled*). Married!! (*Recovering himself, in quite a careless tone.*) Ah! That's right! Who's the happy man?

MRS. D. Come Judy, tell him all about it.

WILL. Now Judy, who is it?

JUDY (*hiding her head*). Mr. Gathercole has made me an offer.

WILL (*warmly*). Sam Gathercole! The best fellow that ever breathed! I'm delighted to hear it! Let me congratulate you. (*Shaking hands; aside.*) Better so!

JUDY. Oh, but I'm not going to accept—I mean I haven't quite settled—

MRS. D. Judy is a little bit puzzled as to what she should say.

WILL (*in a merry tone*). Say? Why say "Yes," of course while he's in the humour; he may change his mind.

MRS. D. But she has to write her answer. Now, Will, you are a capital letter writer, and if you could give her an idea how to word it——

WILL. Me? (*Desperately.*) What have I got to do with it?

MRS. D. Don't you see, you stupid fellow, Judy doesn't want to jump down his throat——

JUDY. As if I had never had an offer before.

MRS. D. She hasn't quite made up her mind. She wants to write doubtfully——

WILL. Very well, that's easy enough. What have I done that I should be saddled with this business?

(*Walking desperately up and down.*)

MRS. D. (*taking him by the shoulders, forcing him into chair against table*). Don't be a bear, Will. Here is pen and ink. Now write a nice letter for her—she will tell you what to say. You have only half-an-hour before post, so I will leave you.

WILL (*with apparent good humour*). Oh, very well, if I must, I must. (*Aside.*) Thank God, it will soon be over! (*Aloud.*) Oh, mother, ask Mary to tell you about Lord Grandborough's invitation.

MRS. D. Very well, my dear. Come, put your heads together! (*Exit L., looking at them.*)

WILL (*at table—all through this scene he assumes a fierce and reckless gaiety*). Now, Judy, how shall we begin this very important letter?

JUDY (*pouting*). I don't know. (*Aside.*) To treat me like this.

WILL. Come, what shall we say? Or stay, you had better write—I'll dictate.

(WILL rises, gives JUDY the pen, she sits at the table, sulkily.)

WILL (*dictating*). "Dear Sam——"

JUDY (*resolutely*). No.

(*Throws away the pen, takes up another.*)

WILL. Well, "Dear Samuel."

JUDY (*throwing away the pen*). No—I hate the name.

WILL. What's in a name? (*She throws away another pen.*) What's the matter with the pens?

JUDY (*much offended*). There isn't one fit to write with in the place! Not one!

WILL (*taking up a pen, and testing the point*). This is a good one. Now (*dictating*), "Dear Mr. Gathercole——"

JUDY (*writing*). "Dear Mr. Gathercole." (*Breaks off suddenly.*) I had a letter from my cousin, Mr. Boggett, by this evening's post.

WILL. Dear old fellow! We had a pleasant time of it in London. I took him to the Monument and Saint Paul's. He marched up to the top like the mighty Duke of York, and then marched down again, while I waited below all the time. And what a rollicking day we had at the British Museum! How is he?

JUDY. He's quite well. He sent a message for you—a very important message!

WILL. Oh, what was that?

JUDY. I shan't tell you. (*Aside.*) I can never give him Cousin Peter's letter now.

WILL. Come, we are not getting on. (*Dictating.*) "Dear Mr. Gathercole——"

JUDY. You said that before.

WILL. Of course, Judy, you have made up your mind to marry him.

JUDY. Not if I found there was somebody I liked better.

WILL. Oh, you'll never do better. He's a man in a thousand. So proceed—"I have much pleasure——"

JUDY (*writing*). "I have much pleasure——"

WILL. "In accepting your kind offer——"

JUDY. "In accepting your kind offer."

WILL. "Yours faithfully," or "Yours devotedly, Judith Loveless." There, you've got it in a nutshell.

JUDY (*reading it*). No, that's too abrupt!

WILL. Not a bit, it's neat, compact, business-like, and above all *determined*! There's nothing like showing a firm front to start with, letting him know that you don't mean to be trifled with!

JUDY (*furiously*). I won't be trifled with!

WILL (*cheerfully*). That's right! You're a girl of spirit! You deserve to have a husband—and to rule him when you've got him. Have you finished your letter?

JUDY. No (*tearing up the letter*)! I can write a better one myself (*sits down to table and writes a letter very quickly*).

WILL. As you please. (*She is writing L. of table—he is standing at fireplace with back to fire—he stretches out his arms to her involuntarily.*) (*Aside.*) Oh, if I dared but speak one word, if I dared but hold you in my arms for one moment!

JUDY (*rising*). There! (*Addressing and sealing up her letter.*) I shall post it to-night, so as not to keep him in uncertainty.

WILL. Of course, that's best.

JUDY (*aside*). I've given him a flat refusal.

WILL. Pray give him my congratulations.

JUDY. That's a matter of course. By the way, I left a glove in this room the other morning.

WILL (*carelessly*). Ah, I found one, and put it in my secretaire. (*Going to secretaire, unlocking it, taking out glove.*) I couldn't imagine whom it belonged to.

JUDY (*triumphantly*). Then why did you kiss it?

WILL (*confused*). I—I—kiss it! What do you mean?

JUDY. Kiss it. Don't you know what that means? Kiss it!

WILL. Oh, you are quite mistaken.

JUDY. I'm not! You did kiss it! You did! You did!

WILL (*lamely*). Well—the fact is—I—I—I—Fanny Robinson had called the previous evening and I thought it was hers. But here it is (*giving glove*). Don't you go and tell her.

JUDY. I will the very first opportunity. (*Throws the glove on the fire; aside.*) I won't tell her, but I'll never forgive him.

WILL (*snatching it from the flames*). Don't do that! It might be useful to you. (*Throws glove carelessly on table.*)

JUDY. I don't like the colour—it's sandy—like Mr. Gathercole's beard.

WILL. Don't revile his beard. He's a dear, good, large-hearted fellow. I don't know anybody whom I would sooner trust with a woman's happiness than Sam Gathercole. His wife will be a lucky woman.

JUDY. But he has got a red beard, now confess, hasn't he, quite carrotty?

WILL. Well, I should call it tawny.

JUDY. Tawny! Tawny!! Tawny!!! (*With a shout of furious derision.*) I'm going to post this letter!

(*Exit, L., defiantly banging the door.*)

WILL (*sinking into a chair*). What have I done? Why did I not tell her all? And what then? Marry her and take her over to that infernal island to die, or leave her here to waste all her youth in waiting for me! No, my little light-hearted darling, I love you too much to blight your best days like that! (*Takes up the glove from table, kisses it; as JUDY enters he crushes it confusedly into his pocket.*)

Enter JUDY, L., with letter in her hand.

JUDY (*in a quavering voice, almost in tears*). I'm going to post this letter. I mean it.

WILL (*springing up, makes a movement to clasp her, restrains himself,—very coldly*). Of course. Why did you write it else?

(*Exit JUDY, L.*)

WILL (*pale and trembling*). Thank God, I conquered! She will be happy as his wife, and she will learn to forget me. Better so, better a thousand times! I have nothing but beggary and privation to offer her! It would be madness. (*Taking out his watch.*) Twenty past nine. I have barely an hour. (*Rings bell.*) Betty must pack my portmanteau. Now, Fortune, you have done your worst to me! Once away from home I will laugh at you!

Enter BETTY, door L.

WILL. Betty, pack my portmanteau for a month.

BETTY. La, Master Will, you never can mean that!

WILL. Yes I do. Pack it at once. I am going by to-night's mail.

BETTY. Oh deary me, whatever has happened! Oh, Master Will, now don't 'ee do nothing hasty, there's my precious boy, now don't 'ee.

WILL. What do you mean? Do as I tell you this instant.

BETTY (*wringing her hands*). Oh, Master Will, you know I've had the bringing of 'ee up, and I love 'ee dearer than my own life, that I do, and now don't 'ee be offended with me 'cause I have allays loved both of 'ee, and said as you was made for one another, and now don't 'ee go and break it off in a moment of temper. Go and make it up—she's waiting for 'ee to do it—there's my precious boy, don't 'ee quarrel with her for sure now.

WILL. Quarrel? What on earth do you mean?

BETTY. Why there's that precious lamb crying her eyes out in the kitchen. Now do 'ee go and kiss her now, do 'ee, Master Will. (*Nudging his elbow coaxingly.*)

WILL. Judy crying. (*About to rush off, restraining himself.*) Well, it's nothing to do with me.

BETTY. Oh don't 'ee say that, Master Will, for she loves you true, that she do.

WILL (*sternly*). I tell you it's no affair of mine. Do as I bid you—pack my portmanteau.

BETTY. Very well, Master Will, if you says so of course I must do it. But I never thought as my young master was the man to break a poor girl's heart as trusted to him, that I never did. (*Aside.*) I'll go and tell Mrs. Darbyshire all about it! (*Exit L.*)

WILL. Break her heart! Well, I must bear it, I suppose! Another hour will see the end of it! If I can only last out till then! I wonder if Mary has told mother. That will be the next difficulty. What excuse can I trump up for rushing off on a night like this?

Enter MRS. DARBYSHIRE, L.

MRS. D. Now, Will, what is all this fuss between you and Judy?

WILL. What fuss?

MRS. D. Why Betty tells me you have quarrelled with Judy, and are going off by the mail train.

WILL. Quite true, I am going by the mail train.

MRS. D. Did you write the letter to Mr. Gathercole?

WILL. Judy wrote it.

MRS. D. She accepted him?

WILL. I believe so. She has gone to post it.

MRS. D. Now Will, be quite candid with me. You are in love with Judy. (*WILL is about to deny it.*) Oh, don't deny it! You can't deceive your mother. Of course this is a great blow to you, and you think it better to leave the Chase for a time; isn't it so?

WILL (*aside*). It would be a good excuse for my sudden departure! She will never let me get away else.

MRS. D. Isn't it so?

WILL. Mother, you have guessed right.

MRS. D. I was sure of it.

WILL. Judy's acceptance of Mr. Gathercole has cut me up very much, and I think it better to go away for a few months. You mustn't mind—you must spare me. I shall get the better of it in time. But not a word of this to Judy, do you hear?

MRS. D. (*smiling*). Oh, not a word!

WILL. It would make her unhappy. I am going to tell Tom to put in the pony and drive me over to the junction. Remember, not a word to Judy!

MRS. D. Of course I won't. (*Exit WILL, R.*) Of course I will! The silly fellow, to throw away his happiness like that! It's lucky he's got a mother to take care of him!

Enter JUDY, L.

JUDY. Where is he? Oh, what can he think of me! I wish I had never tried your plan. I was sure it would fail.

MRS. D. And I'm sure it has not failed.

JUDY. What do you mean?

MRS. D. My dear, he's head over ears in love with you!

JUDY (*with sudden joy*). Oh, you don't say so—I don't believe it. (*Aside.*) He has taken my glove.

MRS. D. He has just told me so with his own lips.

JUDY. Then why didn't he tell *me* so with his own lips?

MRS. D. And what do you think? He actually talks about going away by the mail this very night!

JUDY. Why?

MRS. D. Because he can't endure being near you now you are engaged. Oh, he's in a dreadful state, the poor, dear, stupid fellow!

JUDY. I am so glad.

MRS. D. But you must have used him very badly. You have nearly broken his heart.

JUDY. He has nearly broken mine.

MRS. D. I never saw him so much cut up. What did you say to him?

JUDY. I forget, I know he provoked me very much.

MRS. D. But you shouldn't have treated him unkindly,

you foolish girl! And I am sure you must have done so, or he could never want to run away from home.

JUDY. Oh, I am so sorry. I didn't mean to be unkind to him. I love him so much!

MRS. D. But you shouldn't play fast and loose, Judy. You see you have almost driven him away and lost your chance—

JUDY. Oh, don't say that. If he had only said one word—

MRS. D. My dear Judy, Will is not a fool. You have played your cards very badly. Do you mean to tell me that if you had given him a chance he wouldn't have spoken out to you, as he did to me in this very room a moment ago!

JUDY. Well, I was angry with him; but he might have seen I didn't mean it.

MRS. D. Ah, but my Will is very sensitive, and depend upon it you have hurt him very much.

JUDY. What can I do?

MRS. D. Well, fortunately, you can make amends. When he comes in you must tell him that you are very sorry you treated him as you did, and you will never be wilful and coquettish again! Poor fellow! He loves you devotedly, and the more I think of it the more certain I feel you have wounded him very deeply—

JUDY (*half in tears*). Oh, I wouldn't for the world! I will tell him how sorry I am!

MRS. D. Hark! He's coming! Now don't be a foolish girl and let him slip through your fingers this time. Remember, husbands like my Will are not to be picked up every day. (*Exit, L.*)

WILL (*heard off, R.*). Bring the pony round when you have harnessed her. I shall be ready in ten minutes.

Enter WILL, R.

JUDY moves a step or two towards him very shyly and penitently, looking at him very lovingly as if begging forgiveness, making a little yearning movement towards him with her arms; WILL steels himself against her; at length she goes up to him and puts her hand lovingly on his shoulder, looking at him with great love and supplication in her eyes.

JUDY (*after a pause, very softly and penitently*). I am so sorry, Will. (*He turns away from her.*) I didn't mean to be a naughty girl. (*Pause, stroking his shoulder.*) I wouldn't hurt you for the world—I love you so much. (*He turns away from her.*) Oh, Will, I do love you, indeed I do! (*WILL tears himself from her, and utters a desperate cry, throwing himself in a chair and burying his face on the table.*) JUDY, going up to him, in the same quiet, entreating voice.) Do forgive me. Your mother has told me all!

WILL (*starting up with great indignation*). Plague on her chattering tongue! I am bound to leave here by to-night's mail on business of life or death—its nature is such that I cannot explain it to my mother—I jump at any excuse that will account for my departure—she will have it that it is owing to your engagement to Mr. Gathercole—I allow her to think so, and of course she goes and tells you the next moment! Good heavens, where is the end to the mischief a woman's tongue will do!

JUDY (*horrified*). Then you—you do not love me? Oh! What have I done? What have I said? Oh, I could kill myself! Oh, you have been cruel to me! (*She looks at him with great reproach and then bursts into tears.*)

WILL, *flinging off all restraint, clasps her to him—she hides her face with her hands. WILL kisses her hands, and tries to tear them from her face.*

WILL. Judy! Judy! My own! Look at me! I love you a thousand times better than life! Judy! Hear me! I can't tell you how dear you are to me!

JUDY. Oh, no, no, no, I can never love you now. Oh, let me go home! Oh, I shall never forgive myself! I could bite my tongue out!

WILL. Listen to me, Judy, I have but a few minutes. I have always loved you—believe it or not, as you please—there's not an atom of you but's worth all heaven to me—I love you through and through to the heart's core—God judge me else! But I am an unlucky wretch—through no fault of mine I am a beggar, and worse than a beggar. And I could not drag you down with me!

JUDY (*clinging to him*). Oh, Will, I don't mind that a bit.

WILL. But that's not all. In two days I leave England for many years—

JUDY. And I?

WILL. I'm going to Saint Valentine's Island—a wretchedly unhealthy hole—

JUDY. Unhealthy! And you are going! Oh, no, Will, for my sake—

WILL. Unhealthy for women, I mean. The men stand it well enough. Oh there's no fear for me.

JUDY. Nor for me, I will go too. You shall take me, Will, yes, you shall—

WILL. To poverty and disease, and perhaps death—

JUDY. Yes, with you. I would rather have them with you than health and wealth and long life with anybody else.

WILL. I cannot accept your sacrifice.

JUDY. It is no sacrifice. Oh, don't deceive yourself! It is just what I would choose for myself! I would do it if I knew I had to die to-morrow! But don't fear for me! I am young

and strong; I will help you and work for you—I won't be a bit of a burden to you. Don't refuse me—where you go I will go, where you live I will live—your people shall be my people, and your God my God! Nothing but death shall part us!

WILL (*fervently*). My little God's gift! This is worth all I have endured!

JUDY. You will take me, won't you?

WILL. Not now. The island is too unsettled; but you shall come out to me when I get things straight—say in three years.

JUDY. Oh no, that's too long—life is so short—there is only time just to learn to love, and then we have to die! Oh, no, not three years!

WILL. Well, two years then. You might change your mind.

JUDY (*through her tears*). When the sun shines at midnight I will.

WILL (*taking out his watch*). Five minutes more and I must be gone! I want to have a word with my mother.

(*Going to door, L.*)

JUDY. Oh, wait, I've got a letter for you from cousin Peter. I daredn't give it you before, because——

(*Giving letter from pocket.*)

WILL. Because—why?

JUDY. Because I believe the stupid man takes it for granted that you and I are engaged.

WILL. So we are.

JUDY. But I couldn't give it to you before we were engaged, could I? Read it. What does he say?

WILL (*reading letter*). "Dear Mr. Darbyshire, I daresay you'll think me a very odd sort of fellow——"

JUDY. So he is.

WILL. "But a notion has got into my head that you're a little bit sweet——"

JUDY (*nestling to him*). A little bit sweet! You're a great, big bit sweet!

WILL. "Bit sweet on my cousin Judy. Of course, if you are not——"

JUDY. Ah, but you *are*, aren't you?

WILL. "There's an end of the matter. But if you are, I thought there would be no harm in letting you know that her husband will have fifty thousand dollars from me to start housekeeping——"

JUDY. Oh, Will! There's not a bit of harm in letting you know that, is there?

WILL. "And as I have no near relations of my own, I shall settle a hundred thousand dollars on her on her wedding-day. I've written a letter to the little puss herself——"

JUDY. Yes, it made me so angry, but I'll forgive him.

WILL. "And made matters all right for you, so if you love her, go in and win!"

JUDY. So you have, haven't you?

WILL. "In return for your kindness to me in London——"

JUDY. The Monument, and St. Paul's and the British Museum!

WILL. "I should like you to spend your honeymoon at Chicago, with yours faithfully, Peter Boggett."

Enter, door L., BETTY, bringing portmanteau.

BETTY. There you are, Master Will, there's your portmanteau!

WILL. Take it back, Betty, I shan't want it.

BETTY (*grinning all over her face*). La, bless your dear heart, Master Will, I know'd that!

Enter, L., MRS. DARBYSHIRE, very excited, followed by MARY.

MRS. D. Will, what's all this tale about your going away from home? I insist on knowing!

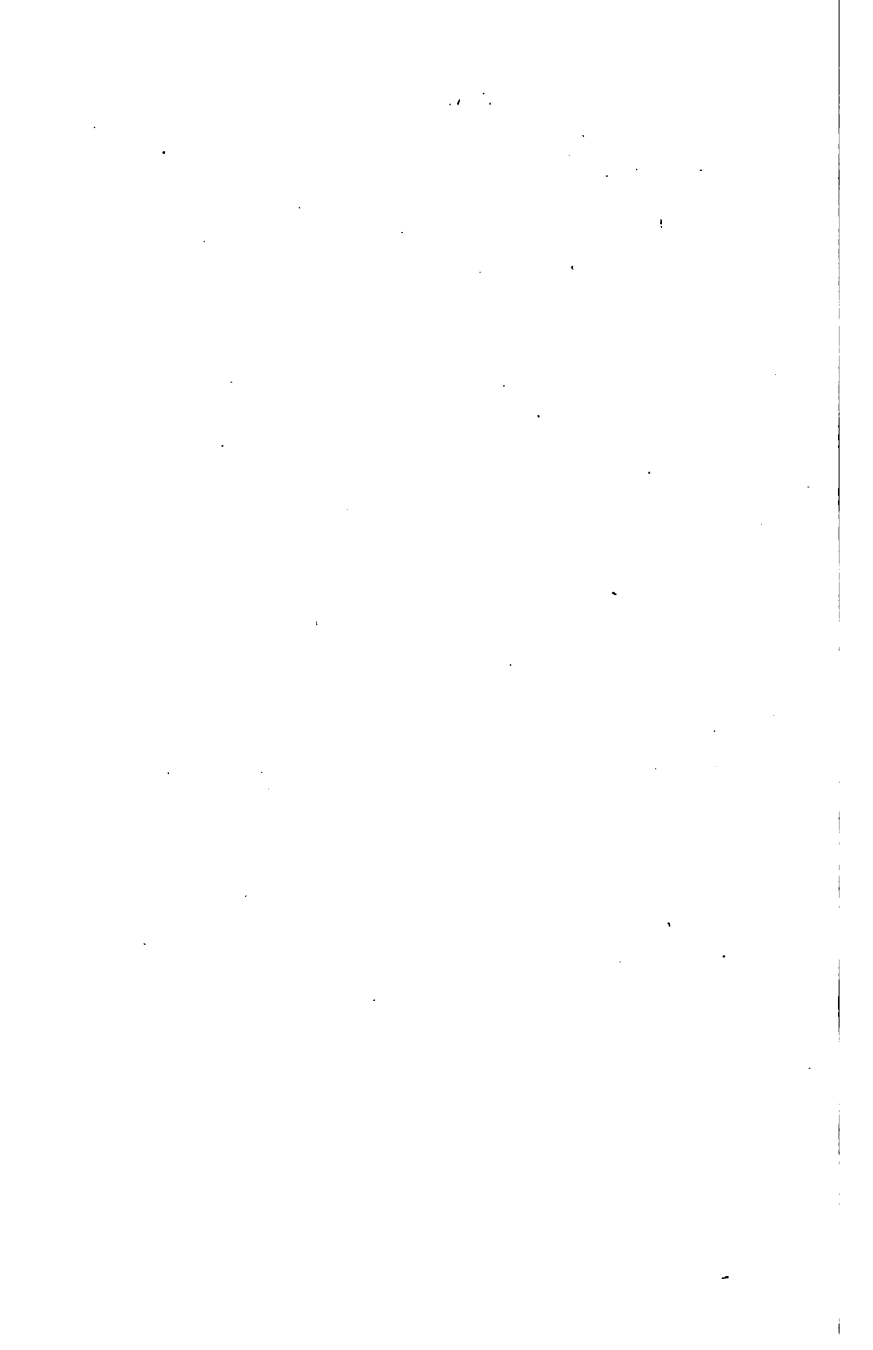
WILL (*coolly*). Nothing, mother, nothing! I have changed my mind, and am going to stay at home and give you another daughter. (*Presenting JUDY.*)

MRS. D. (*kissing JUDY*). My darling girl! (*With great glee.*) Ah, you see, I was right! I was sure my plan would bring him to your feet!

MARY. But, Will, how have you managed this?

WILL (*giving her BOGGETT'S letter—very quietly*). Oh, where there's a WILL there's a WAY. (*Taking JUDY'S hand.*)

CURTAIN.



IN HONOR BOUND

AN ORIGINAL PLAY
IN ONE ACT

By SIDNEY GRUNDY



BOSTON

Walter H. Baker & Co.

IN HONOR BOUND.



CHARACTERS.

SIR GEORGE CARLYON, *an eminent lawyer.*

PHILIP GRAHAM, *a young bachelor.*

LADY CARLYON, *Sir George's wife.*

ROSE DALRYMPLE, *Sir George's ward.*

COSTUMES.

SIR GEORGE.—In elderly gentleman's costume.

PHILIP.—In evening dress.

LADY CARLYON and ROSE.—In evening dress, cloaks.

PROPERTIES.

Two letters, one sealed with sealing wax; law-papers; writing materials; bouquet; box of cigars.

IN HONOR BOUND.



SCENE.—Room at SIR GEORGE CARLYON'S. Fire lit, R.; in front of it, a wide, luxurious lounge with high back; against it, C., a writing table, piled high with briefs, so as to help to obscure the view of the lounge from anybody sitting at the desk; in front of desk a writing chair; a piano, music seat and davenport, L.; doors, R. U. E. and L. I. E.; window at back with curtains drawn. The room is lighted by a lamp which stands upon the desk, a box of cigars by the side of it.

SIR GEORGE ~~discovered, seated at the desk, reading and under-~~
~~scoring rapidly an open brief. He is in evening dress.~~

SIR G. (~~folding up brief~~). Ah, the old story! I need read no more. (~~Lays down the brief and rises.~~) What's this? (~~Picks up a letter lying on the edge of the desk.~~) Oh—ah!—the letter that came by this morning's post for Philip. ^{La señora Rosa! No necesita leer más} A woman's writing. How alike they write! The very double of my niece's hand! (~~Throws down the letter and looks at watch.~~) Eleven o'clock. What has become of Philip? ^{¿Dónde se ha hecho de —}

Enter PHILIP GRAHAM, L., ~~evening dress.~~

Ah, there you are!

PHILIP. Are you at liberty?

SIR G. Yes, I have done work for to-night. Come in. I am ^{ya estáis aquí} afraid I have neglected you.

PHILIP. Not in the least. I stayed upstairs on purpose, knowing you were busy. I have been unpacking. (~~SIR GEORGE draws forward chair, C.~~)

SIR G. Sit down. You must be tired after your journey. (~~Sits on the end of the lounge, facing audience.~~)

PHILIP (~~sits, C.~~). I was tired and hungry, but your cook has kindly seen to that. ^{¿qué estáis aquí?}

SIR G. Lady Carlyon had quite given you up, or she would have stayed in to welcome you. ^{¿qué estáis aquí?}

PHILIP. My train was very late.

SIR G. Oh, by-the-bye (~~rises~~) there is a letter waiting for you. (~~Gives it him.~~) ^{¿qué estáis aquí?}

PHILIP. Thanks. (SIR GEORGE resumes his seat; aside) Rose's hand. (pockets it).

SIR G. My wife is at the theatre.

PHILIP. Oh!

SIR G. We have had another visitor to-day—a niece of mine, who has come from abroad. I promised I would take her to the play, but just as I was leaving chambers some briefs tumbled in, and I thought it might be as well to glance them over; so my wife has taken her.

PHILIP. Lady Carlyon is quite well, I hope.

SIR G. Perfectly, thank you.

PHILIP. It is two years since I saw her.

SIR G. So it is. We have seen nothing of you lately—you, whom we used to see so much of. Where have you been?

PHILIP. Well, all over the world. The day I met you, when you were so kind as to invite me here, was the day of my arrival home.

SIR G. So kind as to invite you! My dear boy, you raised objections enough to my invitation.

PHILIP. I was afraid of trespassing on your hospitality.

SIR G. And so you have been round the world?

PHILIP. From Dan to Beersheba.

SIR G. And you found all barren?

PHILIP. On the contrary, I've had a very jolly time—especially upon the home voyage.

SIR G. You took the better for it.

PHILIP. I am a new man.

SIR G. You weren't well when you went away.

PHILIP. I was depressed and out of sorts.

SIR G. So I observed.

PHILIP. You noticed it?

SIR G. And I remember thinking at the time there was a woman in the case.

PHILIP. That is all over now. I am as happy as the sand-boy in the saying.

SIR G. Then, there's another woman in the case.

PHILIP. My dear Sir George, according to your views, there is a woman in every case.

SIR G. (pointing to table). There are some twenty briefs. Open which one of them you please, and somewhere in the folds you'll find a petticoat.

PHILIP. What, twenty women hidden in these briefs.

SIR G. At least. There never was a case without a woman in it, and I never leave one till I find her; for I know well enough until I do not have not mastered it. There is a woman in every case, my friend.

PHILIP. To tell the truth, there is. A charming girl I met upon the voyage home.

SIR G. The jolly voyage home.

PHILIP. I am in love this time, Sir George.

SIR G. Oh, yes! we are always in love this time.

Crei' estar enamorado antes, pero no!

PHILIP. I thought I was before, but I was wrong.

SIR G. Of course! we never were before!

PHILIP. And, better still, I am engaged.

SIR G. What, to the charming girl?

PHILIP. The only girl in the wide world for me.

SIR G. Well, you've been found ^{out}, so you ought to know. I hope you will be happy. It's a toss-up, Philip.

PHILIP. I'm afraid your profession makes you cynical.

SIR G. ^{Very} Gad, it would make an angel cynical.

PHILIP. ~~No doubt you met with some extraordinary cases~~
(turning over briefs).

SIR G. Never. All ordinary. To a man who has had twenty years' experience, no possible case can appear extraordinary. There aren't three there of which I didn't know the end before I turned a page. No wonder we don't always read our briefs, for we know most of them by heart (*Lies back*).

PHILIP. Hallo! (*smiling*).

SIR G. What have you found?

PHILIP. ~~A breach of promise case.~~ *Una promesa de cas. Puede ser divertido.* This looks amusing.

SIR G. Very amusing for the judge and jury. Very amusing for the public, too. Very amusing for the new-made wife to read in all the newspapers her husband's past.

PHILIP. Is the defendant married, then?

SIR G. Of course he is. They always are. And of course he was on with the new love before he was off with the old. They always will be. The old love was no better than she need be, and no more was he. Very amusing for the new love, isn't it?

PHILIP. Of course the letters will be read in court?

SIR G. And published in the papers. "November, 1877—your own loving and devoted Harry"—(laughter). November, 1878—Yours most affectionately, Henry"—(loud laughter). November, 1879—Yours truly, Henry Horrocks"—(roars of laughter). Oh, it's a most amusing case—for Mrs. Henry Horrocks.

PHILIP. Why don't you settle it? You are for the defendant.

SIR G. We've tried, but it's too late. Take warning by my client.

PHILIP. I?

SIR G. You be in time, if you are not too late already.

PHILIP. Excuse me, mine was quite a different case. Thank heaven, I have no reason to reproach myself. There was no love, at any rate on my side, in the matter you allude to.

SIR G. And yet you fled the country to avoid the lady. (*Sitting up*).

PHILIP. I never said so.

SIR G. No, my boy; you never said that two and two makes four, but it does, doesn't it? (*looking at PHILIP through his glasses*).

PHILIP. No doubt. I felt that my position was—(*hesitates*).

SIR G. Equivocal. ~~ambiguo, indeciso.~~

PHILIP. That is the word I wanted.

SIR G. Useful word.

PHILIP. And feeling that, I thought the best course was to—
SIR G. Run away.

PHILIP. But as for promises of marriage, there was nothing of that sort. In fact, there couldn't be.

SIR G. Because the lady was already—

PHILIP. Hang it, Sir George, *you're* telling *me* my case!

SIR G. (*drops glasses*). You'll find it in the third brief on your right.

PHILIP (*looking at brief*). "Winter v. Winter and Hockheimer"?

SIR G. That's your case, as far as it has gone.

PHILIP (*takes up brief and reads endorsement*). "In the High Court of Justice—~~Probate and~~ ~~and~~ But this is a divorce case!"

SIR G. Just so.

PHILIP. Oh, that's not my case. (*Puts brief back in its place.*)

SIR G. I said as far as it had gone. Hockheimer ran away. You ran away. But Hockheimer came back again. And I observe that *you've* come back again.

PHILIP. But I'm not Hockheimer!

SIR G. As far as you have gone. Hockheimer was a friend of Winter's—

PHILIP. But I'm *not*! I never saw the man in my life!

SIR G. No, but the other man?

PHILIP. What other man?

SIR G. The husband.

PHILIP. I didn't say he was my friend!

SIR G. Oh, yes, you did.

PHILIP. When did I say so?

SIR G. When you ran away. (*Puts glasses up.*)

PHILIP. Spare me, Sir George. You make me feel like a witness under cross-examination. I didn't mean to breathe a word of this, and somehow I have told you everything.

SIR G. Well, you have told me a good deal. (*Drops glasses.*) Now, will you let me give you my advice?

PHILIP. By all means.

SIR G. Keep those women apart.

PHILIP. Which women?

SIR G. (*smiling*). The charming girl and the neglected wife.

PHILIP. I never said she was neglected.

SIR G. But she is, isn't she? (*Putting up his eye-glasses.*)

PHILIP. Those glasses worry me.

SIR G. (*dropping the eye-glasses*). I beg your pardon; it's the force of habit. Off with the old love—friend—or what you will—and never let the new one see her. Off with her entirely! That's my advice; and many a hundred guineas have been paid for worse.

PHILIP. Oh, they will never meet. I mean to live abroad. The girl I am engaged to is a South Australian. (*SIR GEORGE lifts his head quickly.*) And she has only come to England on a visit. Her parents are both dead, and she came over with a maiden aunt with whom she is now stopping.

★

SIR G. Where?

PHILIP. At Bayswater. In a few weeks she will go back to Melbourne; and then all danger, if there be any, is over.

SIR G. So you have come from Melbourne in the "Kangaroo"? (*rises*).

PHILIP. Who told you what boat I came over in?

SIR G. I gathered it from what you said yourself.

PHILIP. I won't say a word more, or in two minutes you will guess the lady's name.

SIR G. I have already guessed it.

PHILIP. What!

SIR G. Rose Dalrymple.

PHILIP (*springs up*). This is inexplicable!

SIR G. Not at all.

PHILIP. I have told nobody!

SIR G. You have told *me*.

PHILIP. You know Miss Dalrymple?

SIR G. She is my niece. (PHILIP *steps back*.) She is a South Australian. She came to England in the "Kangaroo," and has been stopping with a maiden aunt at Bayswater.

PHILIP. Your niece!

SIR G. I am her guardian, since my sister died.

PHILIP. Then, she is your wife's—

SIR G. Niece by marriage (*crosses, L.*). They have just come back from the theatre.

PHILIP. Oh! (*Drops into chair, C.*)

SIR G. I hear them.

Enter ROSE DALRYMPLE, in evening dress, as if returning from the theatre.

ROSE. Ah, Uncle George! (*about to embrace*.)

PHILIP (*springs up again*). Rose!

ROSE. Philip! (*Rushes to his arms*.)

SIR G. Humph. Exit Uncle George. (*Arranges papers on desk*.)

ROSE. How late you are! We've been expecting you all the afternoon.

PHILIP (*taking her aside, R.*). You didn't say that you were coming here!

ROSE. No! didn't I tell you I would give you a surprise?

PHILIP. When?

ROSE. In my letter. Haven't you received it?

PHILIP. Yes, but I haven't had time to open it. (*Produces it—breaks the seal—and replaces it in his pocket, unnoticed by SIR GEORGE*.) And when I told you of my invitation here, you didn't tell me that you knew Sir George.

ROSE. Because I wanted to surprise you, dear.

PHILIP. Well, you have done so most effectually. Tell me, does Lady Carlyon know of our engagement?

ROSE. No, not yet. I never saw her till to-day, and I didn't

like to be so confidential.

PHILIP (*relieved*). Ah!

ROSE. You're not angry with me for not having told her?

PHILIP. Not at all. We will surprise her.

ROSE. Shall we?

PHILIP. To-night we will pretend we are strangers.

ROSE. But I shall pretend very badly, I am sure.

PHILIP. Oh, you can keep a secret. You have shown me that.

ROSE. I'll try, at any rate.

SIR GEORGE (*putting chair, c., into its place at desk*). Now, Miss Dalrymple, if you are at liberty, perhaps you will be kind enough to tell me what has become of my wife.

ROSE (*going to him, c.*). She'll be here directly. She is only speaking to the servants. (*Kisses him.*)

Enter LADY CARLYON, L., also in evening dress with a bouquet; she at once sees PHILIP and he her; PHILIP, R., turns full front to audience.

LADY C. (*aside*). Philip! (*Stops short.*)

SIR G. (*seeing her*). Ah, here she is! (*Goes to her, L.*) My dear, you don't look well!

LADY C. The theatre was so close.

SIR G. It always makes you ill. But you have not seen Philip (*indicates PHILIP*).

LADY C. Ah, Mr. Graham! (*Advances c.—PHILIP advances to meet her.*) Excuse me for not recognizing you. (*They shake hands rather ceremoniously.*)

SIR G. What has turned Philip into Mr. Graham, pray?

LADY C. He has not been to see us for so long.

PHILIP. Allow me. (*Helps to remove her cloak.*)

SIR G. No wonder, if you make a stranger of him when he comes (*Sits c.*).

LADY C. If Philip is a stranger, he has made one of himself.

PHILIP. The fault is mine entirely. (*Takes cloak.*)

LADY C. Thanks.

Goes L. again with bouquet and sits down—ROSE has meanwhile deposited her cloak at the farther end of the lounge—she takes the other cloak from PHILIP and flings it upon her own, then leans over the desk—PHILIP sits upon the end of the lounge.

SIR G. Well, how did you enjoy the play?

ROSE. Oh, so much. Uncle George! Although it was in French, I followed every word.

PHILIP. It is the French plays you have been to?

SIR G. What was the piece?

LADY C. "Une Chaine," by Eugene Scribe.

SIR G. I don't remember it.

ROSE. And it was so exciting. There is a young man in it—such a nice young man, with a moustache—oh, such a sweet moustache!

SIR G. Well?

ROSE. He's in love.

SIR G. Of course.

ROSE. With a young girl—oh, such a stupid girl! I can't think what he could have seen in her—and *she's* in love with *him*.

SIR G. And they get married, I suppose.

ROSE. In the last act; but in the meantime there is such a to-do.

SIR G. Why?

ROSE. It appears, before the play began, the hero—the young man—

PHILIP. With the moustache—

ROSE. Had been in love with someone else.

SIR G. Ah!

ROSE. But now he doesn't care for her a bit.

SIR G. What is the difficulty, then?

ROSE. *She* cares for *him*; and though he's trying through the whole four acts, do what he will, he can't get rid of her.

SIR G. I see. That is the chain.

* ROSE. He nearly breaks it half a dozen times, but something always happens to prevent him. You've no idea how interesting it is—although, of course, it's very, very wrong.

SIR G. Why wrong?

ROSE. Well, you see, some one else is married; and of course she oughtn't to care anything about the nice young man.

SIR G. Although he has so lovely a moustache.

ROSE. But she does—which is wicked—but it's very interesting.

SIR G. (*to* LADY CARLYON). What did *you* think of it, my dear?

LADY C. It is a painful subject.

ROSE. Aunt Bell didn't like it; but she took it all so seriously. If it were real, it would be very sad; but after all what is it but a play? Besides, it all takes place in Paris; nobody pretends that such things happen here.

LADY C. Of course (*quickly*).

PHILIP. Of course (*quickly*).

SIR G. (*ironically*). Of course. (*Takes up the third brief on his right—and plays with it*).

ROSE. I read a notice of the piece this morning, and I quite agreed with it.

SIR G. What did the notice say?

ROSE. It said it was "an admirable play, but that an English version of it was impossible."

SIR G. Why so?

ROSE. "Because"—how did it put it?—oh, "because these vivid but unwholesome pictures of French life have happily no"—something—I forget exactly what—"to the chaste beauty of our English homes." I can't remember the precise words, but I know the criticism made me long to see the play.

SIR G. (*putting the brief back in its place, after he sees it has caught PHILIP's eyes*). Of course it filled the theatre?

LADY C. The house was crowded, and the atmosphere was insupportable. (*Smells bouquet*).

SIR G. No doubt; if you were bending all night long over those sickly flowers. (*Crosses to her—she rises.*) Give them to me. (*Takes bouquet.*) Why, they are almost withered. (*Comes c., with bouquet*).

LADY C. They were fresh yesterday.

SIR G. (c.) To-day's and yesterday's are different things (*holds the bouquet, head downwards*).

ROSE. It wasn't the flowers, though. Aunt Bell didn't like the play.

PHILIP. It isn't everybody who admires French plays.

* SIR G. (*to LADY CARLYON*). What, were you scandalized? You must know, Philip—you do know, of course—Lady Carlyon is a dragon in her way—the very pink and pattern of propriety. Now, I'll be bound, she didn't like the moral of that comedy.

LADY C. Had it a moral?

SIR G. Certainly! and one man would do well to lay to heart. If that young man—

ROSE. The one with the moustache?

SIR G. Had buried his first love when it was dead, he wouldn't have been haunted by its ghost. When passion is burnt out, sweep the hearth clean, and clear away the ash, before you set alight another fire. It is a law of life. Old things give place to new. The loves of yesterday are like these faded flowers, fit only to be cast into the flames (*flings bouquet into fire*). That is the moral; and I call it excellent. (*Sits c., and looks at PHILIP.*)

LADY C. (*aside*). He doesn't speak to me. Am I a faded flower? (*Sits, L.*)

ROSE. Very good, Uncle George. That ought to get the verdict (*leaning upon his shoulder*).

SIR G. Let us hope it will (*looking at PHILIP*).

ROSE. If all your speeches are as nice as that, I must come down to court and hear you plead.

SIR G. I shall be proud to have so fair an auditor. But we've not told your aunt the news.

LADY C. What news?

SIR G. Philip informs me, much to my surprise—

PHILIP (*rising*). Sir George! I have considered your advice, and have resolved to act on it. Till I have done so it would perhaps be better—

SIR G. Not to say anything? I will respect your confidence.

LADY C. You have some private matter to discuss. Shall we go? (*Rises*).

SIR G. We will go, if you will excuse us. (*Rises*).

LADY C. Certainly.

SIR G. (*to PHILIP*). Come with me.

[*Exit, L.*]

PHILIP. In case I don't see you again, Miss Dalrymple, good night (*bows*).

ROSE. Good evening, Mr. Graham (*she courtseys ceremoni-*

ously).

LADY C. (*aside*). What can they have to talk about these two? (*reflectively*).

PHILIP comes, L., and stands before LADY CARLYON.

* PHILIP. Good night (*puts out his hand*).

LADY C. (*giving him her hand slowly, which he takes and drops*). Good night. (*Exit PHILIP, quickly, L.*) How glad he is to go! (*Drops down on seat again, L., leaning her head back, pressed between her hands—slight pause—ROSE comes down.*)

ROSE. Is anything the matter?

LADY C. I beg your pardon, dear. (*Rises and puts her arm round ROSE and leads her to the lounge.*) I don't feel very well to-night.

ROSE. Sit down and let me talk to you. A chat will cheer you perhaps.

LADY CARLYON sits upon the lounge before the fire—ROSE kneels beside her, on the further side from audience, so that both their faces are visible.

LADY C. I am so glad to have you with me, Rose. I wish I had you always. I am very lonely.

ROSE. You have Uncle George.

LADY C. Sir George is always busy, and I do not care to interrupt him.

ROSE. But he has *some* leisure.

LADY C. I never knew him to have any since I was his wife. It's not his fault. A man in his position has so much to do. When he is not in court, he is in Parliament.

ROSE. He is at home to-night.

LADY C. And when he is at home, he is at work.

ROSE. Poor lonely aunt! (*clasps her arms round her*). I told you at the theatre how like you were to Madame de Saint Geran in the play.

LADY C. Don't let us talk about that cruel play.

ROSE. Why was it cruel?

LADY C. What did it make you think of Madame de Saint Geran?

ROSE. Well—I thought she was a very wicked woman. Wasn't she?

LADY C. Perhaps. But if we had been told her history—we might have sympathized with her. Were you ever in love?

ROSE. Yes! I mean no! I can't exactly say.

LADY C. If you had been, you wouldn't hesitate. There is no doubt about it. It is a weird thing. Sometimes it leads to heights, sometimes to depths. I do not say it is an excuse. All I say is, those who have never loved are not entitled to judge those who have. Wait till you are in love yourself, before you judge poor Madame de Saint Geran. And if you ever should be—

ROSE. Oh, I shall be!

LADY C. Marry for love, my dear, or not at all.

ROSE. What did you marry for?

LADY C. (*stroking ROSE's hair*). I didn't marry; I was married. Don't ask me any more.

ROSE. Poor Aunt Bell! lie down, and let me play to you. (*Rises*).

LADY C. Do, dear. I am too tired to talk. (*She lies back on the lounge, ROSE goes to the piano.*)

ROSE (*sitting at piano*). What shall I play you?

LADY C. Anything you please.

ROSE *plays on the piano*—LADY CARLYON, with the firelight flickering about her, gradually falls asleep. *Music.*

ROSE. Aunt! (*turning*) Aunt! (*Rises and goes on tip-toe to the back of the lounge.*) She's fast asleep. (*Covers LADY CARLYON with the cloaks, until the upper part of her figure is quite hidden, and then stands surveying her.*) How pretty she looks! but how pale! I like you, aunt! I never saw you till to-day, but I like you. (*Comes down*). If I stop I shall wake her. (*Crosses to c.*). I'll lower the lamp and go (*lowers the lamp and crosses behind desk to R. at back*). Good night, Aunt Bell! (*bending over the further end of the lounge*). Good night—(*kisses her softly*)—and pleasant dreams! [Exit, R.]

The room is now darkened, except for the firelight, which throws a strong glow over LADY CARLYON, so that her slightest movement is quite visible to the audience, but not from the L. side of the desk. At present she is fast asleep and motionless.

Re-enter SIR GEORGE, L., followed by PHILIP.

SIR G. Yes, they have gone to bed. The lamp has been turned down. Now we can smoke. (*About to turn lamp up.*)

PHILIP. Don't turn it up, please. This half light is charming.

SIR G. Just as you like, but I can scarcely see you. (*Takes up cigar box.*)

PHILIP (*aside*). So much the better.

SIR G. A cigar? (*offers box*).

PHILIP. Thanks (*takes one*).

SIR G. Now we can talk more comfortably (*Takes a cigar himself while PHILIP lights his with a match which he then hands to SIR GEORGE.*) Thanks. (*PHILIP sits, L., SIR GEORGE, C.*) As I was saying, Rose being my ward, I am concerned in this affair, and what I just now recommended as a friend, in my position as her guardian I can insist upon.

PHILIP. I have already said, Sir George, that I intend to act on your advice.

SIR G. How does the matter stand?

PHILIP. Exactly as it stood when I left England. It was a friendship, nothing but a friendship.

SJR G. Friendship?

PHILIP. Dangerous, no doubt; that's why I went abroad.

SIR G. Have you communicated with the lady since?

PHILIP. Never.

SIR G. Nor she with you? (*Pause.*) Eh?

PHILIP. Once.

SIR G. Ah! Now I understand the case. May I inquire what you propose to do?

PHILIP. To see her and to tell her I am going to be married.

SIR G. What does that put an end to?

PHILIP. Everything.

SIR G. What, friendship?

PHILIP. Well—

SIR G. You said friendship.

PHILIP. Yes.

SIR G. Does marriage put an end to friendship? I hope not.

PHILIP. Of course it doesn't, but—

SIR G. That friendship must be put an end to. Philip, you are the son of an old comrade, and I believe that, if you start fair you will make an admirable husband. But you *must* start fair, or you won't. I don't ask you to bring to me a spotless character—a history without a speck or flaw; all I ask—and on that I insist—is that you shall begin your future life unhampered by the past.

PHILIP. What would you have me do?

SIR G. Make your fair friend distinctly understand that all—however little that all may have been—is over..

PHILIP. Will that satisfy you?

SIR G. Yes; but I must have proof she understands it.

PHILIP. What sort of proof?

SJR G. We lawyers have great faith in black and white. You laymen think it a cumbrous form; but I have seen too many fortunes turn on a forgotten sheet of notepaper not to appreciate its value.

PHILIP. What do you mean?

SIR G. That you must bring to me a letter from your friend—

PHILIP. A letter from her?

SIR G. A mere acknowledgment that all is over.

PHILIP. A letter!

SIR G. Signed, mind you, signed.

PHILIP. Signed! (*His cry wakes* LADY CARLYON.)

SIR G. Nothing like a signature.

PHILIP (*rising*). Wouldn't you like it stamped as well, Sir George? (*LADY CARLYON moves slightly.*)

SIR G. A penny postage stamp will be enough.

PHILIP. That is impossible.

SIR G. It must be got. (*Lays down cigar.* PHILIP *sinks back into seat again*—LADY CARLYON, *who has gone through the first*

processes of waking, lifts her head; at the sound of SIR GEORGE'S voice she starts half up and holds herself in that position during the rest of the conversation, but always so as not to be visible to the others. SIR GEORGE rises and stands by PHILIP.) I feel so strongly that is the right course, because in my own life I have pursued the opposite; and I have paid—nay, I have not yet paid the penalty. I claim to be no better than my kind. When I was married, I too was entangled. I was a rising man—and it was necessary that I should obtain a seat in Parliament. Lady Carlyon's father had much influence in the county which I represent. My marriage was political. I had a charming wife, who did her best to love me, heaven knows; and I might have loved *her*, if this entanglement from which I could not extricate myself had not been there. But there it was, and with a woman's quickness she discovered it. I know she did, although she never spoke; and with a generosity which I can never repay, she did not add to my embarrassment. What was the sequel? Death cut the knot which I could not unravel. I am free. Now, many a time amongst these dead dry bones, (*pointing to briefs*) I hunger for the love it is too late to win. Still that accursed past stands like a wall betwixt my wife and me. (*Returns, c.*) Profit by my experience. (*sits, c.*)

PHILIP. No doubt the course you recommend would be the proper course to take, if it were possible; but in the circumstances it is quite impossible.

SIR G. Difficult, perhaps, but not impossible. Have no false delicacy in a case like this. This lady—I presume, whoever she may be, she is a lady—who is fond of *you*, for that is evident, but of whose friendship you are weary, must be sacrificed. I pity her, but there is no help for it.

PHILIP. None! but a letter is out of the question.

SIR G. Why?

PHILIP. How could I ask her—oh, it is impossible!

SIR G. Then, you do feel for her?

PHILIP. I can't help pitying her.

SIR G. Perhaps care for her—a little?

PHILIP. Sir George (*rises*), I give you my assurance as a gentleman, nothing has passed between us but kind words. I never loved her; and when I think of all the trouble she has brought on me—how she has banished me for months abroad—how nearly she has made me a false friend—I hate the very mention of her name!

LADY C. (*who has followed his words in an agony, unable to restrain herself*). Philip! (*Remembering herself, drops back upon the lounge, and feigns to be asleep.*)

PHILIP (*turning, L., quickly*). What's that?

SIR G. (*rising and turning up the lamp, sees her upon the lounge*). My wife! (*Going round at back of desk to lounge.*) She is asleep. (*Moving her.*) Bell! Isabell! (*She pretends to wake, then starts up suddenly.*)

LADY C. Oh, how you startled me!

SIR G. Nay, how you startled us!

LADY C. How so?

SIR G. By calling out.

LADY C. Forgive me for disturbing you, but I was dreaming.

SIR G. And not a pleasant dream, apparently. Why, you are trembling all over.

LADY C. (*smiling*). So I am.

SIR G. And you cried out as though you were in pain.

LADY C. It was in terror, I dreamt that I was walking on the edge of a high cliff.

SIR G. Pshaw!

LADY C. Philip was with me.

SIR G. You had a safe escort.

LADY C. But the path grew so difficult we had to separate. I followed him; when suddenly he turned and——

SIR G. And what?

LADY C. Flung me over! I shrieked out, "Philip!"—and awoke.

SIR G. That was what startled us.

LADY C. Forgive me, Mr. Graham, for having even dreamt that you could be so little chivalrous.

SIR G. You are not well, my dear. It's time you went upstairs. I'll ring for your maid.

LADY C. She has gone to bed. It doesn't matter. I can go alone.

SIR G. Where is Miss Dalrymple?

LADY C. I'll look for her.

SIR G. Stay where you are. I'll look for her. (*Exit, L. The two stand opposite each other—pause.*)

LADY C. Well, Philip?

PHILIP. Was this really a dream?

LADY C. No.

PHILIP. You have overheard my conversation with Sir George?

LADY C. The end of it.

PHILIP. And you cried out because——

LADY C. I realized the truth.

PHILIP. I didn't weigh my words. Perhaps I over-stated——

LADY C. That will do. (*Pause.*) You chose a curious confidant!

PHILIP. I had no choice. Sir George is so acute; he guessed so much, I had to pass it off by asking him to give me his advice.

LADY C. It was a dangerous expedient. Does he suspect—who——

PHILIP. No.

LADY C. Though he is so acute?

PHILIP. Those who are gifted with long sight are often blind to what is at their feet.

LADY C. How did he come to talk on such a subject?

PHILIP. I had been telling him——

LADY C. Go on.

PHILIP. That I am going to be married.

LADY C. Oh (*quite calmly*.) That was your secret? (*Sits*).

PHILIP. Yes. He guessed the reason why I went abroad, and putting this and that together, he divined there was a difficulty.

LADY C. What is the difficulty?

PHILIP. The lady to whom I am engaged is not yet of age, and those who have the care of her insist upon some proof that our acquaintanceship is at an end.

LADY C. They also know—

PHILIP. Not who you are!

LADY C. You make too many confidants. What proof do they require?

PHILIP. A monstrous proof!

LADY C. What?

PHILIP. Why, a letter with your signature! It is outrageous!

LADY C. Does Sir George think so?

PHILIP. He agrees with them.

LADY C. What does he say you ought to do?

PHILIP. To ask for such a letter.

LADY C. Then why don't you?

PHILIP. Oh, have some pity on me!

LADY C. That is but fair; for you have pitied *me* (*rises*). You shall not ask me for the document you want; but you shall have it.

PHILIP. Ah, you don't understand—

LADY C. A letter with my signature. I understand.

PHILIP. But—

LADY C. I only ask one favor in return.

PHILIP. Whatever I can do—

LADY C. Once whilst you were away, I was so foolish as to write to you. Whether or not my note was forwarded, I don't know; but if you received it—

PHILIP. I did.

LADY C. Please to return it to me; that is all I ask. (*slight pause*) Well?

PHILIP. I regret—

LADY C. Surely you will do that?

PHILIP. I can't.

LADY C. Can't! Why? (*Slight pause*.)

PHILIP (*drops his head*). I have destroyed it.

LADY C. Ah! (*Turns up and sits at desk*.) Sit down a moment whilst I write the letter. (*Writes rapidly*.)

PHILIP. It would be to no purpose.

LADY C. Oh, I will make it to the purpose (*writing*).

PHILIP. Ah, if you only understood my situation!

LADY C. Pray sit down (*continues writing*).

PHILIP (*sits on the end of lounge facing the audience—aside*). How shall I tell her who it is requires it? (*Rises—aloud*.) Lady Carlyon—

LADY C. (*writing*). In one moment.

PHILIP (*sits—aside*). How am I to say it? (*Pauses—during which LADY CARLYON finishes and folds up the letter.*)

LADY C. (*rising and advancing*). There is the letter (*puts it in his hand*).

PHILIP. It is of no use (*rises*).

LADY C. It is signed.

PHILIP. That is the very reason. How can I show your signature—

LADY C. You have my leave. The guardian is a gentleman, I hope.

PHILIP. Undoubtedly.

LADY C. Then he will not betray me.

PHILIP. But you don't know—(*Door opens, L.*)

LADY C. My husband! hush!

Re-enter SIR GEORGE, L. PHILIP hides behind his back the hand which holds the letter.

SIR G. Rose has gone up stairs, but I've sent word you want her. Are you no better? You're upset to-night.

PHILIP. It is my fault, Sir George. I've just been telling your wife of my difficulties.

SIR G. You couldn't have done better. I'm sure she will agree with me, that you should get the signature required. That is the only difficulty in the matter.

PHILIP. But it is insurmountable. If I had the signature, how could I use it?

SIR G. Not without permission.

PHILIP. No!

LADY C. But you *have* permission! (*quickly and inadvertently*).

SIR G. What?

LADY C. (*aside*). I've said too much.

SIR G. How did you get it? There's no post at this hour.

PHILIP (*with his disengaged hand produces ROSE's envelope from his pocket*). In the letter which you gave to me—

SIR G. Oh—ah!

PHILIP. And which I have just opened.

SIR G. The letter in the lady's handwriting.

PHILIP. Of her own accord, she releases me—

SIR G. This is a marvellous coincidence.

PHILIP (*shows letter*). But here the letter is.

SIR G. How alike you women write! I could almost have sworn that envelope was in my niece's hand.

LADY C. How could that be?

SIR G. Why not?

LADY C. Rose write to Philip, whom she doesn't know!

SIR G. Not know?

LADY C. They never saw each other till to-night.

SIR G. You said Philip had told you—

PHILIP. All but that.

SIR G. You have not told my wife it's Rose you are engaged

to?

LADY C. Rose!

* SIR G. You may well look surprised. It seems they met on board the "Kangaroo."

LADY C. He is engaged to Rose?

PHILIP. Yes.

LADY C. Then the guardian is—

SIR G. I. (*touches his breast, advances one step forward, and puts out his hand*). Give me the letter. (LADY CARLYON and PHILIP both recoil one step—pause—they stand breathless, gazing at SIR GEORGE.) You hesitate.

PHILIP. Sir George, you must make some allowances. This letter is addressed to me and I should not be justified in letting it go out of my possession.

SIR G. How, then, do you propose to satisfy me?

LADY C. Might he not read it?

SIR G. Thank you, my dear, for the suggestion. That will meet the difficulty.

PHILIP. Then, I will read it. (*Reads nervously, the letter trembling in his hands.*) "I hear you are going to be married. Good-bye, Philip. You need not fear that I shall trouble you again; I have your happiness too much at heart; but if I should, this letter puts me at your mercy. Should the necessity arise, you have my leave to give it to whoever has the right to ask for it.—Yours, for the last time—"

SIR G. Stop. Is the letter signed?

PHILIP. In full.

SIR G. Now, give it me.

PHILIP. Sir George—

SIR G. The ground is cut from under you. You are expressly authorized to give that letter to whoever has the right to ask for it. I have the right—

PHILIP. But you never will exercise it!

SIR G. Now. I have a reason.

PHILIP. Lady Carlyon!

SIR G. I accept the arbiter. Lady Carlyon, am I right or wrong?

LADY C. (*in a low voice and with an effort*). Right.

SIR G. The award's against you.

LADY C. Give him the letter.

PHILIP. But—

- L SIR G. Sir, I demand it! (PHILIP gives it him.) I want it for a very special purpose (*folding the letter up into a spill, but never letting his eyes fall upon it*). The woman who wrote this will never trouble you. If she has done wrong, she has borne her punishment. Therefore, in pity, let us hide her shame. (*Lights spill at lamp, and holds it in his hand—all three stand watching it, until the ashes drop upon the floor, then turn aside, LADY CARLYON, R., PHILIP, L., SIR GEORGE to back of scene.*)

Re-enter ROSE, R., in a dressing-gown.

ROSE. You want me, aunt?

SIR G. *I want you, Rose (leads her to PHILIP). Philip has asked for my consent to your engagement. I give it cordially. He is the son of a good father, and I think he will make you a good husband.*

ROSE. Uncle George! *(embraces him—turns to PHILIP)* You haven't kept our secret!

PHILIP. No, I couldn't wait.

SIR G. *(crosses to LADY CARLYON). Won't you congratulate them? (Stands R., thoughtfully.)*

LADY C. Yes *(crosses to ROSE and PHILIP).*

ROSE *(embracing her)*. Arn't you surprised, Aunt Bell?

LADY C. I was, when first I heard. I hope you will be very happy. You, too, Philip *(Gives him her hand, then crosses to SIR GEORGE.)*

ROSE. Why don't you kiss her, Philip?

PHILIP. I'll kiss you instead. *(They sit aside, L., without noticing the others.)*

LADY C. *(laying her hand upon SIR GEORGE'S arm)*. What are you thinking of?

SIR G. I was just wondering if that poor woman's love, which had so gone astray, will ever go back to her husband.

LADY C. Yes, if he is as generous as you.

SIR G. How was I generous?

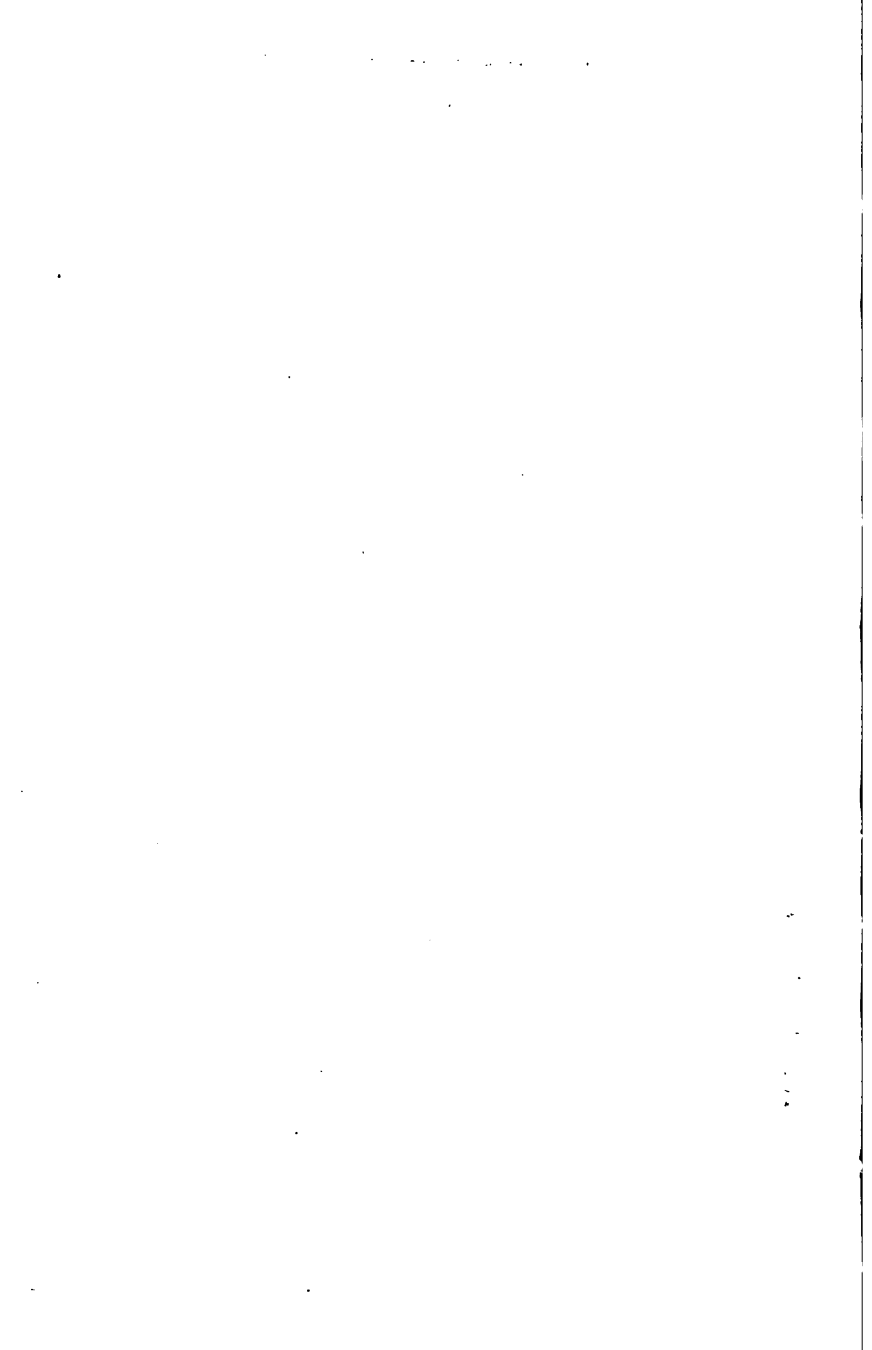
LADY C. In sparing her.

SIR G. I was not generous. *(Each looking in the other's eyes with meaning.)* I simply paid a debt of honor I have owed too long. If I *was* generous, was it not you who taught me generosity?

LADY C. George, you have guessed her name!

SIR G. But I shall never mention it. *(Embrace).*

CURTAIN.



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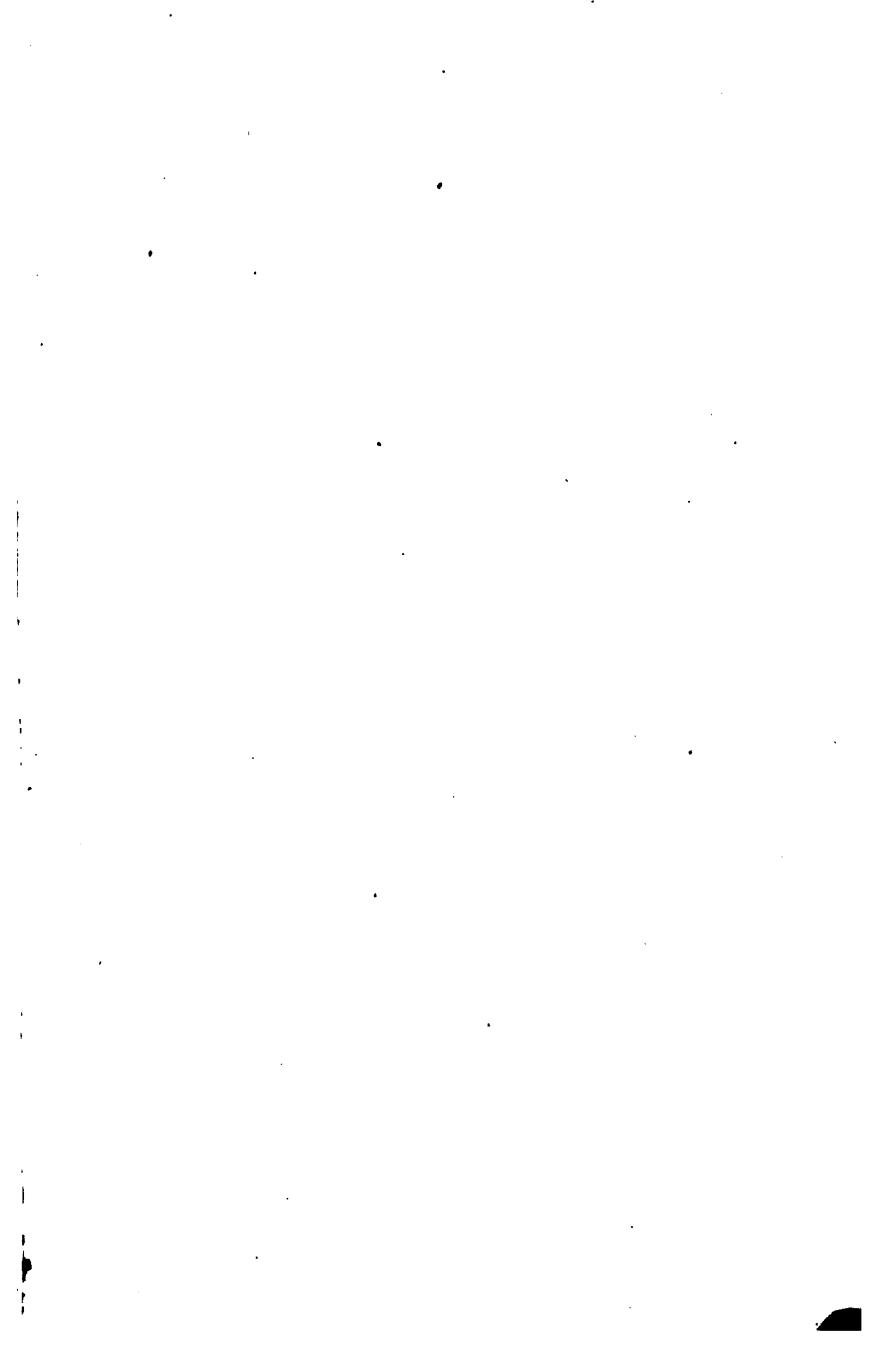
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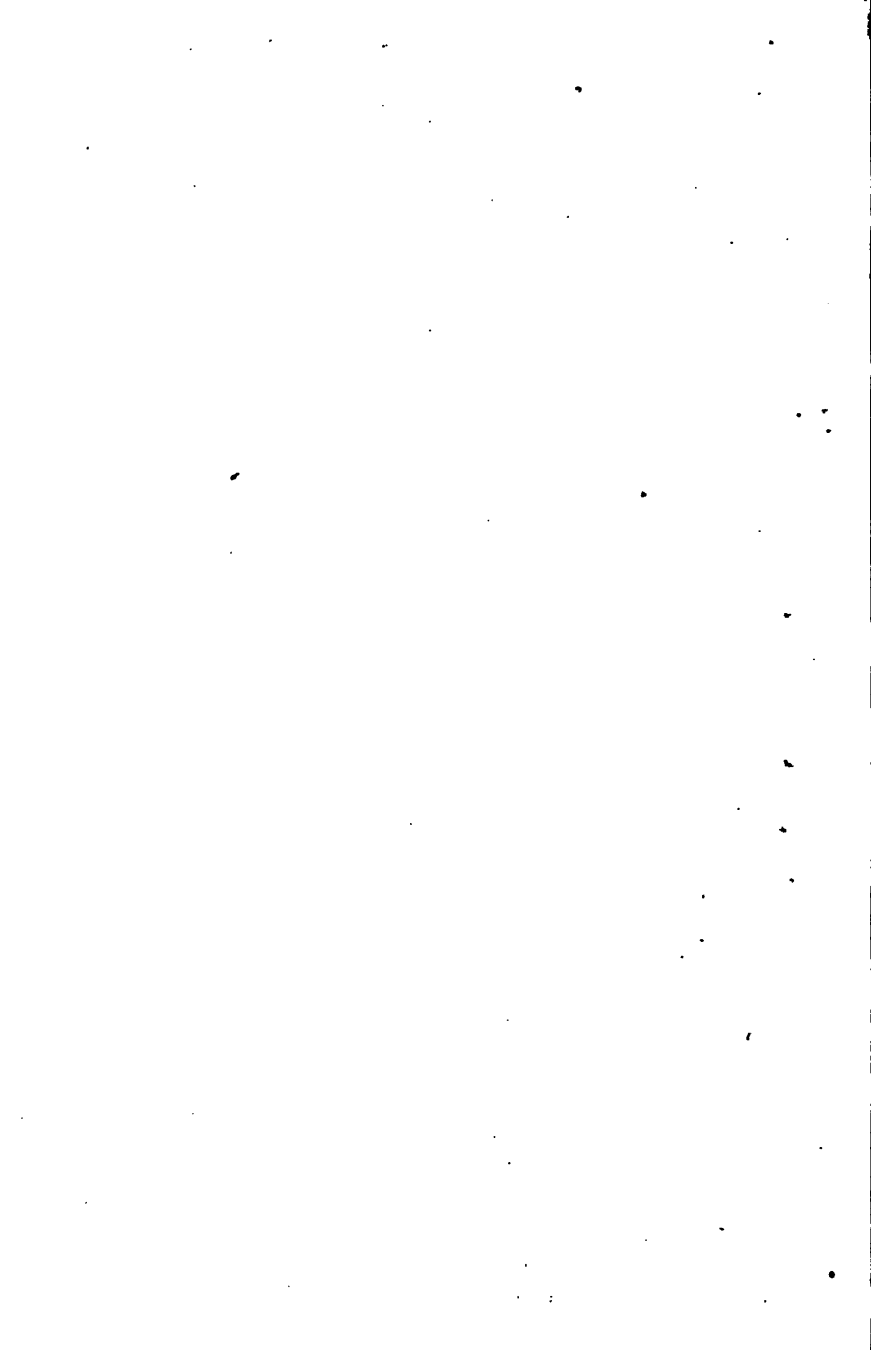
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